Sports Illustrated

PLUS
PEYTON MANNING NEVER STOPS | BY MICHAEL SILVER P. 52
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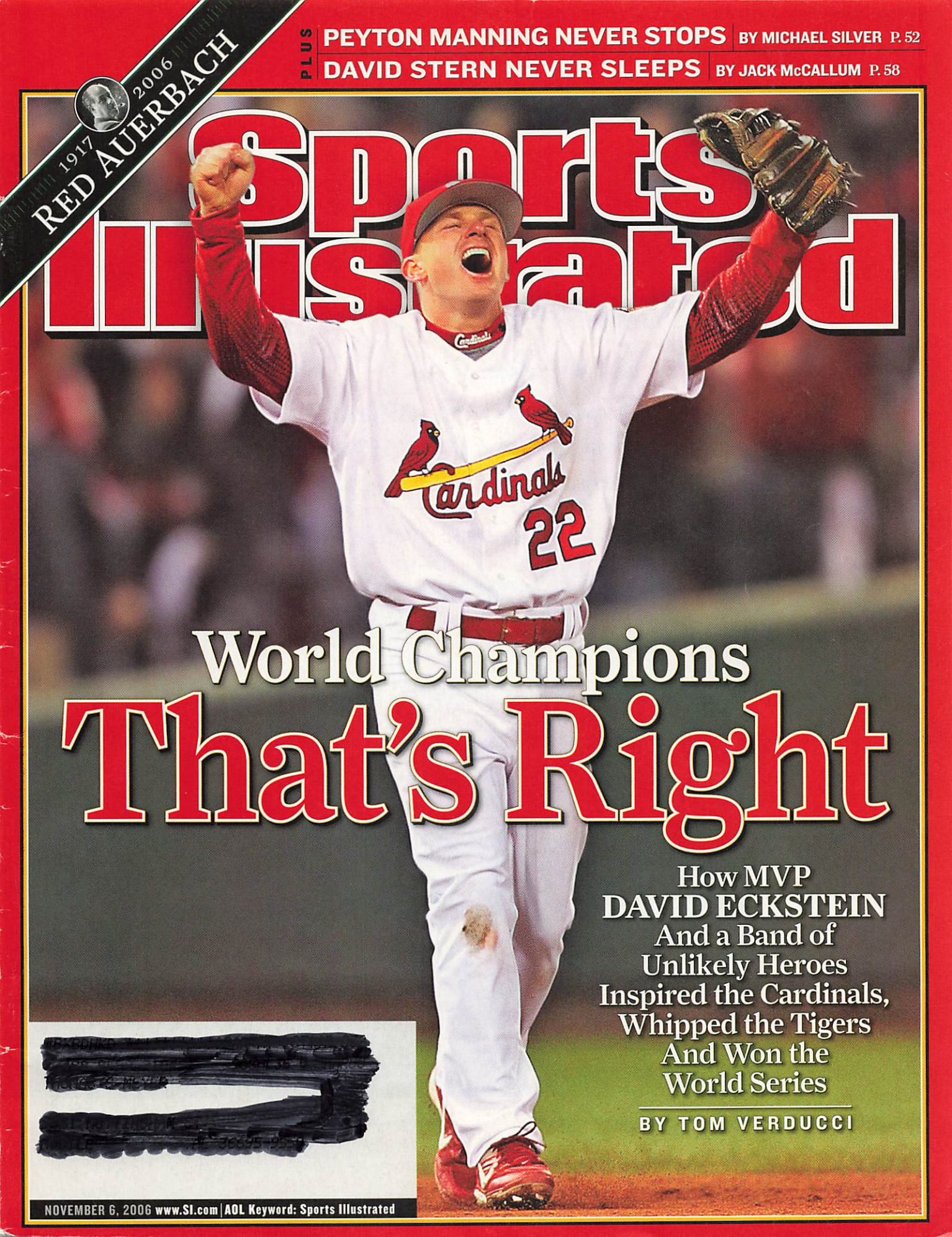
1917 2006
RED AUERBACH



World Champions
That's Right

How MVP DAVID ECKSTEIN And a Band of Unlikely Heroes Inspired the Cardinals, Whipped the Tigers And Won the World Series

BY TOM VERDUCCI

NOVEMBER 6, 2006 www.SI.com | AOL Keyword: Sports Illustrated

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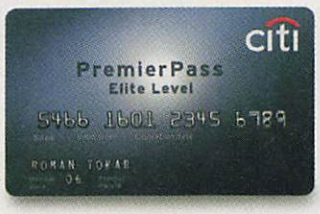

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Peyton Manning was on top of his game on Sunday, when he completed 32 of 39 passes for 345 yards to dismantle Denver.

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PHOTOGRAPH BY AL TIELEMANS
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SI Extra

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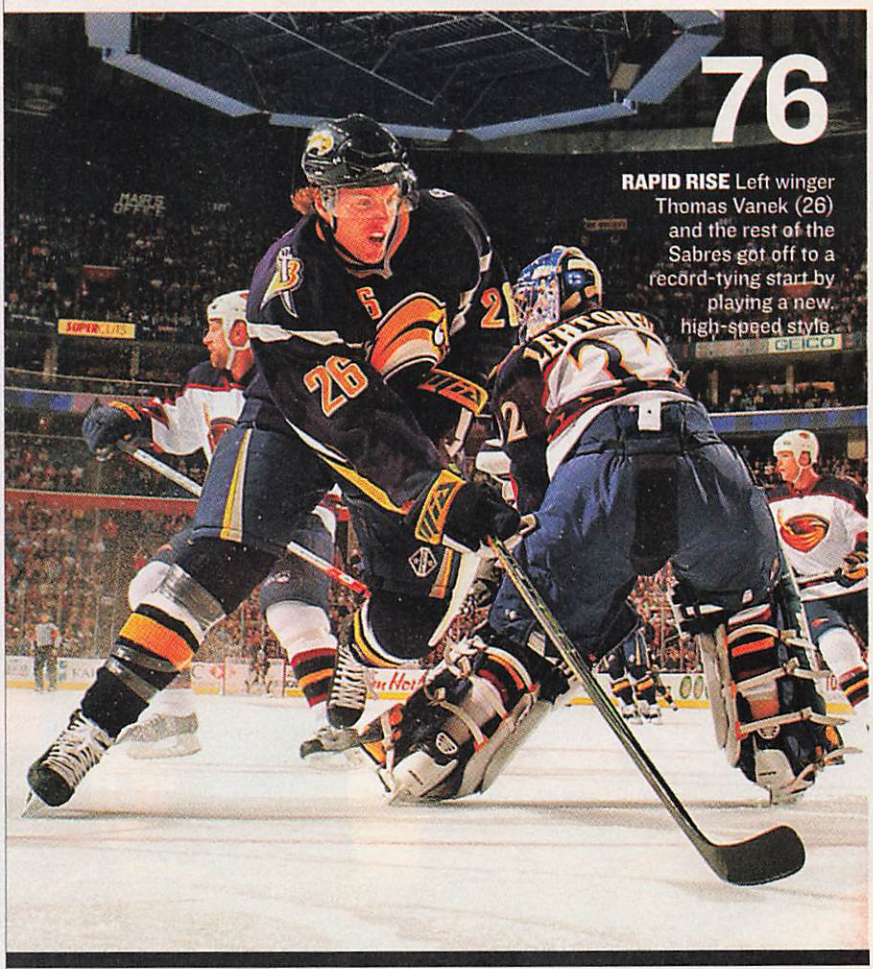

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RAPID RISE Left winger Thomas Vanek (26) and the rest of the Sabres got off to a record-tying start by playing a new, high-speed style.

BILL WIPPERT (VANEK); WALTER IOOSS JR. (JAMES); JOHN BIEVER (HART); MEL LEVINE (DR. Z)

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>>NBA

LeBron James *(right)* has turned the Cavaliers into a playoff team. But when will he turn them into champs? SI.com explores the future in a special King James package at SI.com/nba that includes a LeBron–Michael Jordan comparison.

>>COLLEGE FOOTBALL

As running back Mike Hart *(left)* and No. 2 Michigan try to stay unbeaten for a Nov. 18 showdown against top-ranked Ohio State, SI.com's Stewart Mandel gets in on the action by revealing which one he thinks will advance to the national title game, and he predicts the 31 other bowl matchups as well. Check out his updated projections every week at SI.com/collegefootball.

>>HORSE RACING

Will Preakness winner Bernardini claim the final prize of the season? Follow the Breeders' Cup with reports from Tim Layden at SI.com/more.

>>NFL

See how grizzled NFL expert Dr. Z *(right)* holds up when making picks against swimsuit model Brooklyn Decker every week at SI.com/nfl.

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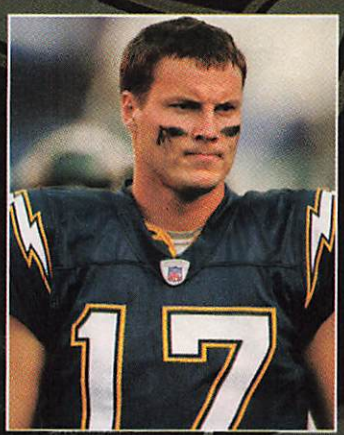
LeadingOff

Stiffed Upper Lip

Chargers running back LaDainian Tomlinson blasted through a tackle by Rams safety Oshiomogho Atogwe en route to a 38-yard touchdown, the first of his three scores in San Diego's 38–24 home win on Sunday. While Tomlinson rushed for 183 yards on 25 carries, quarterback Philip Rivers (inset) connected on 15 of 23 passes for 206 yards.

Photographs by John W. McDonough



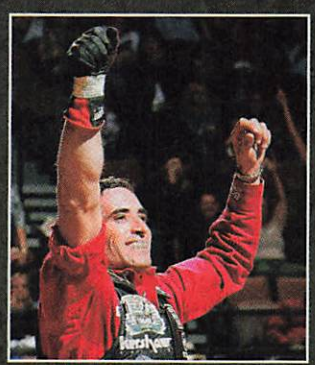
For more Leading Off pictures, go to SI.com/photos.

Rams
R-Ade

Bull Tilt

Heath Shrimp of Australia was bent out of shape during a rough ride on Super Cool at the Professional Bull Riders World Finals last Friday in Las Vegas. Guilherme Marchi (inset) from Brazil was the points leader in the PBR season standings at week's end.

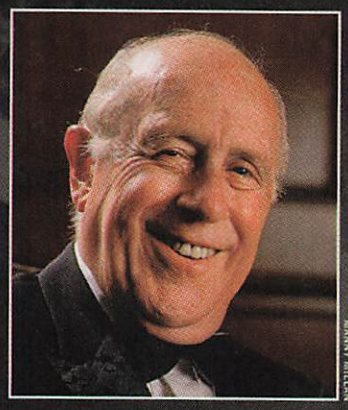
Photographs by Donald Miralle/Getty Images



Arnold (Red) Auerbach 1917–2006

He didn't have to wave his rolled-up program from the bench or smoke his victory cigar during another Celtics victory to cut an intimidating (or abrasive) figure at Boston Garden in 1956–57. That season Auerbach coached Boston to the first of its 11 NBA championships in 13 years; his larcenous personnel moves as general manager laid the groundwork for five more titles. Although he lived in Washington, D.C., throughout his career, he remained an executive for the team even at 75 (inset). Auerbach died of a heart attack, at 89, last Saturday (page 44).

Photograph by Hy Peskin/Time Life Pictures/Getty Images



MANNY MILLAN

Tough Love

I'll be framing your Oct. 16 cover and hanging it on my wall at work. I'm in the U.S. Air Force, and wherever I'm stationed, I tell college football fans that the SEC is the toughest conference. I'd like to see Michigan, Ohio State, Texas or USC get through a season in the SEC and come out undefeated.

Tech. Sgt. Mark Godwin, U.S. Air Force
RAF Lakenheath, U.K.

As a Tennessee fan I loved the cover, but, more important, you described the near impossibility of winning the national championship as a member of the SEC (*Battle of the South*, Oct. 16). Auburn went undefeated—including a conference championship game win—two years ago and did not even get a chance to play for the national championship.

Mike McGowan, Canton, Ga.

Why did *Battle of the South* ignore how weak the lower part of the SEC is? If it's true that Florida, Tennessee, Auburn, and LSU are the toughest top tier of teams in any conference, then it's equally true that no major conference has a worse lower division than Ole Miss, Kentucky, Vandy and Mississippi State.

Steven C. Silverman, Englewood, Colo.

Maybe if SEC teams stopped playing Wofford, Florida International and Western Carolina, they would not have to whine about being left out of the BCS championship every year.

Ryan Krench, Seattle

Eye on the Tigers

Your story on the American League Division Series was a prime example of why I read SI (*Blown Away*, Oct. 16). Instead of writing endlessly about the Yankees' "collapse," Tom Verducci focused on the Detroit Tigers—the team that won—a welcome relief for me and many others.

Craig Keeton, Ashland, Va.

Running It Up

I can't believe Dan Lawrence, a high school football coach in Connecticut whose team won by more than 50 points, got a one-game suspension (HIGH SCHOOL PLAYERS, Oct. 16). Is it the winning team's job to keep the score close? Good sportsmanship is seen in how the players play the game, not on the scoreboard. I am curious as to what Connecticut plans to do to coaches of individual sports like golf and track. I don't look forward to seeing a sprinter slow down to a jog to "keep it close" or a golfer purposely miss putts to make the opponent feel better. Those situations would be ridiculous, and so is taking a knee in the third quarter of a football game to keep from being suspended.

Todd Schumacher, Pasco, Wash.

What is the coach supposed to do if he is winning by a lot: put in the flute section from the band and have them punt on first down? Maybe Connecticut needs a new rule that requires a mandatory group hug after any game that doesn't end in a tie.

Robert F. Weidman, Newark, Del.

The Popularity Gap

One reason the NFL gets a pass from fans in response to the boorish and criminal behavior of so many of its players is simple: NFL football has morphed from a sporting event to an entertainment spectacle (SCORECARD, Oct. 9). Today's NFL has more in common with reality TV than with the game pioneered by Paul Brown and George Halas. The NBA should be grateful it is being held to a tougher standard; that's an indication that their fans—and the media—still view basketball as an athletic endeavor, unlike *Survivor NFL*.

Tom Griffo, Hillsborough, N.J.

As a black man I am infuriated that, once again, some people are playing the race card to excuse bad behavior on the part of professional athletes. If the facts show that the majority of misbehavers in the NBA are black, then we should look within to see how we can correct this malady, rather than blaming others for racist opinions. In the past year the sports with the most negative news have been baseball and cycling. If someone were to say that they were viewed negatively because they were mostly white, we would laugh.

Bill Lawson, Reston, Va.

Operation Push

Thank you for your article on Patrick Henry Hughes and his father, Patrick John Hughes, who pushes his son's wheelchair during performances by the Louisville marching band (LIFE OF REILLY, Oct. 16). My wife and I have a two-year-old son, Matthew, who has a genetic disease called spinal muscular atrophy (type 2) that devastated our world. At best Matthew will be relegated to a wheelchair, and the worst is something I cannot stand to describe. I am a research scientist dedicated to finding new drugs to extend and enhance human life, and to be unable to help my "little man" is unfathomable. Reilly's column made me think of the bright future that I hope Matthew and I will have together. If Matthew and I can grow up to be half the men that the Hugheses are, we will surely be a success.

Tim Reilly, Manlius, N.Y.

Wouldn't this father-son team be a refreshing TV reality show? It's much more inspiring than *The Bachelor* or any show about Paris Hilton and her friend. Hats off to Louisville and the Hugheses.

John C. Hayes, Albany, N.Y.

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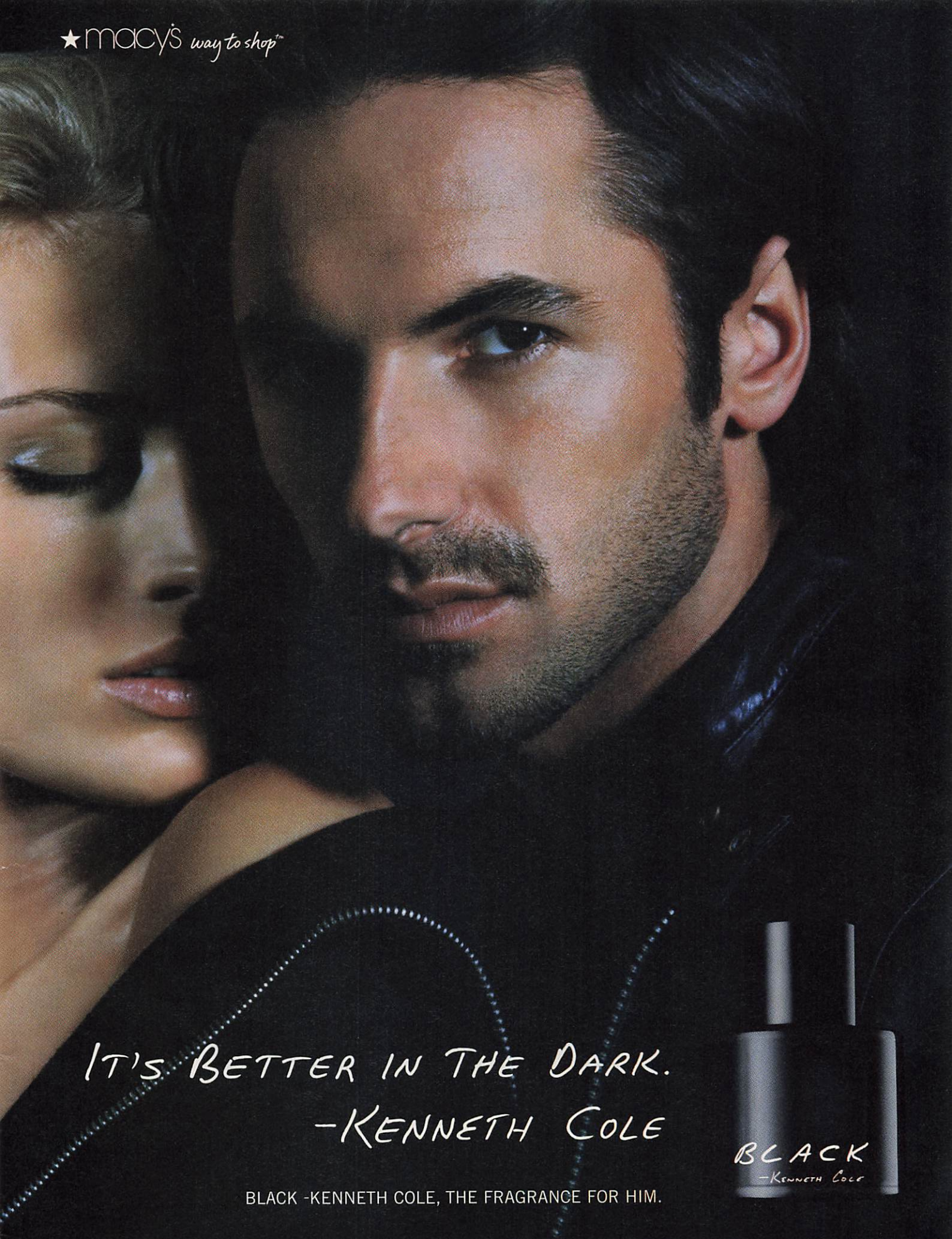
DAVID BERGMAN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Sport Makes the Words Go Round

by Steve Rushin

"IN THE NFL," says a league veteran, "every team has a *get-back coach*, a guy whose job is to hold up his arms and yell, 'Get back!' when [bench players] get too close to the field."

Get-back coach is a felicitous linguistic invention, like *Gretzky's office* (for the area behind a goal in hockey) or *exercise bulimic* (for anyone trying to sweat off the calories they've just eaten). And sports are constantly minting these coinages. If language is a breathing organism, our games hyperventilate.

When the next edition of *The Dickson Baseball Dictionary* is published in 2008, it will contain 10,000 words and phrases, twice as many as in the first edition, published in 1989. "First you have *run batted in*, then *RBI*, then *ribby*, then *rib eye* and now *steak*," notes author and word nerd Paul Dickson, whose new book is *Slang: The Topical Dictionary of Americanisms.*

To explain why Luis Castillo didn't bunt during a crucial at bat in the Twins-A's playoff series, Minnesota manager Ron Gardenhire said, "They were *banzaiin'* all over the place." Translation: Oakland infielders were charging the plate. Baseball—like surfing—has taken the World War II cry of the kamikaze pilot and applied it to another suicidal act.

It works in reverse too. Phrases from sports are constantly crossing over to the real world. And so the current vogue for holding five-year-olds back from kindergarten an extra year is called *redshirting*.

Phrases from sports are constantly crossing over. And so the current vogue for holding five-year-olds back from kindergarten an extra year is called *redshirting*.

Has there ever been a more apt appellation than the one given to English soccer groupies: *goaldiggers*? Rodeo groupies have long been called *buckle bunnies*, a phrase that entered—and was thus interred?—in *The New Oxford American Dictionary*, along with *Texas Hold 'Em*, the poker game that is a hothouse for slang. In Texas hold 'em, a pocket hand of ace and king is called an *Anna Kournikova*, and not just because of the way it appears (A, K) when fanned out in front of you. It's also a hand that looks great but often doesn't hold up against lesser opening cards.

There are more names for mullets than the Inuit have for snow, among them *hockey hair* and *NASCAR sunscreen*—incidentally, a NASCAR winner's postrace practice of putting on a dozen different baseball caps, each bearing the logo of a sponsor, is called a *hat dance*—but the best neologism defines something that was crying out for a name. Take those A-list stars (such as Joe Montana and Tiger Woods) who do lucrative commercials in Asia that they'd never do in the West. The website that exists to out them takes its name from a necessary new verb: *Japander.*

Two hundred years ago British cockfighting and boxing writer Pierce Egan invented all manner of terms still in use today, including *cock of the walk* and *battle royale*. In soccer the free kick that bends around or over a defensive wall and dips past a goalkeeper is called, in Portuguese, a *folha seca*, which means "dry leaf." You need only look out a window to see a swirling leaf afloat on the wind to know why. Like *lullaby* or *Brigitte Bardot*, *folha seca* is the rare word or phrase that is every bit as beautiful as the thing it describes.

It also happens to be a specialty of Roberto Carlos, a Real Madrid *galáctico*, which is European soccerese for the rank above superstar, an all-galaxy player. The word started in Spain but quickly went viral, spreading to the rest of the globe, if not yet the rest of the Milky Way.

Much great slang remains obscure occupational jargon. According to pro football writer Vic Carucci, NFL scouts say that a linebacker who uses his hands well to shed blockers while moving laterally can *play the piano*. Other slang is commissioned. A few years ago *The Washington Post* asked readers to name the act of sneaking peeks at a football game on TV during a party. The winner was *ESPN-age*, as in *espionage*.

And yet, despite our best efforts, much of the sports world remains linguistically unmapped. Let's remedy that. I'll spot you two new ones to get started. *Persona non grotto*: Any athlete (such as Cade McNown) banned from the Playboy Mansion. *Imbecell*: that fan on the phone behind home plate, waving to his buddies at home.

Some slang will live forever. *Rookie* was first recorded by Rudyard Kipling. (It was a 19th-century British barracks corruption of *recruit*.) And some new phrases grow so tiresome so quickly that we can't bear to hear them even one more time. (Let's take *Throw him under the bus* and throw *it* under the bus.)

Of course, most current coinage is rendered hopelessly passé simply by its appearance in SPORTS ILLUSTRATED or any other mass medium—a phenomenon that has a neologism of its own. "It's called the *Couric Rule*," says Dickson, sighing. "Once a popular talk-show host uses a word like *bling-bling* or *def*, it's gone." □

SIMON BRUTY

If you have a comment for Steve Rushin, send it to rushin@siletters.com.

"Berbick, an apparent homicide victim, was

Scorec

Dawg Day Afternoons

Browns games rarely give them much to cheer about, but the NFL's most faithful fans just can't stay away

By Mark Bechtel

ON SUNDAY the Browns played host to the Jets, a team that holds a special place in the hearts of Cleveland fans. Twenty years ago, in an AFC divisional playoff game against New York, those woofing Milk-Bone tossers—who were recently found to be the NFL's best and most loyal fans in a study by bizjournals.com—did what all supporters dream of doing: They made a tangible contribution to a win.

Late in the game the Dawg Pound denizens were serenading New York's boorish defensive end, Mark Gastineau, with chants of "Gastineau sucks." What it lacked in cleverness it made up for in its ability to agitate. Gastineau started jawing back at the fans, and with a little more than four minutes left and the Jets up 20–10, he hit Browns quarterback Bernie Kosar a good two beats after he released a pass. The roughing-the-passer penalty gave Cleveland a key first down, and the Browns went on to win the game in overtime. "Gastineau was so pissed off," says Dawg Pound founder John Thompson, who still tells the tale with pride. "For the fans to be a part of the outcome was pretty wild."

It was one of the most remarkable comebacks in postseason history, but the game is significant for another reason: Until they topped the bizjournals study, it was pretty much the last good thing to happen to Browns fans. Since that Jets game they have seen their team lose two AFC Championship Games in such crushing fashion that the losses were given names: The Drive and The Fumble. They saw the most beloved player in franchise history, Kosar, released by coach Bill Belichick in the middle of the 1993 season, only to catch on with the Cowboys and win the Super Bowl ring that had eluded him with the Browns. (A popular T-shirt featured Kosar's ring on an upraised middle finger and the words THANKS, BILL.) They watched as Belichick, a disaster in Cleveland, went on to become Lombardi in a hoodie with New England. They saw their team, one of just six now in the league never to make it to the Super Bowl, taken away when owner Art Modell moved the franchise to Baltimore in 1996—where, natch, the Ravens won the Super Bowl four years later. "That was hard," says Thompson.

After the Browns left Cleveland, Thompson, 45, a Cuyahoga County maintenance worker who has legally changed his name to John Big Dawg Thompson, started getting invitations to speak. So he traveled the state preaching the word like a man of the cloth. Except, of course, his collar was of the canine variety and he wore a rubber dog mask that he bought the day before the 1985 season opener, when he stumbled out of a bar after a long day of watching college football and

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one of two men to fight both Muhammad Ali and Mike Tyson." —TREVOR BERBICK OBITUARY, PAGE 18

ard

found himself standing in front of a costume shop. (At training camp Thompson had seen Browns players barking at one another after big plays. Just like that, the Dawg Pound was born.)

Thompson talked football with the guys at the American Legion Hall. He visited schools and lectured about the importance of fighting for what you hold dear. He testified in front of a congressional antitrust committee (sans mask) about what a team means to its hometown fans. "Anything to keep the spirit alive," says Thompson.

It worked. The city has embraced the Browns even more closely since they were reborn in 1999—which is remarkable given how bad the team has been. A record of 38–81. A defense that has never ranked better than 15th in the league. An offense that's never been better than 23rd. The new Browns have been plagued by bad drafts (in 2003 they spent a second-round pick on an unheralded linebacker from a D-II school that was 0–11) and ridiculous injuries (Kellen Winslow tore up his leg popping wheelies on a motorcycle). Or, in the case of William Green, a 2002 first-round bust whose then girlfriend stabbed him in the back with a steak knife, both.

Yet the fans have stuck by the Browns because, well, they take their football seriously in northeast Ohio. The NFL was born 50 miles to the south, in Canton. The team's founder, Paul Brown, grew up 55 miles away in Massillon, a town of 31,000 with a high school stadium that seats 18,000. And lest anyone forget, the Browns haven't always been this bad, which is a source of pride in a place that rivals New Jersey for the title of Punch-line Capital of America. "We're proud of our town, and the Browns represent it," says Thompson. "My whole life I've heard negative things about it, but this is a cool-ass town. It's a little broke, but it's cool."

In fact, per capita income was one of the factors the bizjournals study took into account, as was December weather. Only six NFL cities were found to be worse off economically, and only three are colder. Still, the Browns have played before a house that's been 99.83% full since their return.

The stadium was packed again on Sunday, when 72,507 turned out for the Jets game. Hours before kickoff, James Smith, who's been coming up from Massillon for games for 20 years, was tailgating with three friends in the parking lot. The 25-mph wind whipping off Lake Erie didn't bother them, nor did the prospect of watching Cleveland fall to 1–6, a fate they avoided with a 20–13 upset of the Jets on a controversial call. "It's a beautiful day," Smith said. "It's a Browns Sunday." □

ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN CUNEO; JOHN IACONO (WAINWRIGHT); DARREN CARROLL (CLEMENS)

Feeling Flush

Thanks to labor peace and record revenues, major league teams are swimming in cash and eager to spend

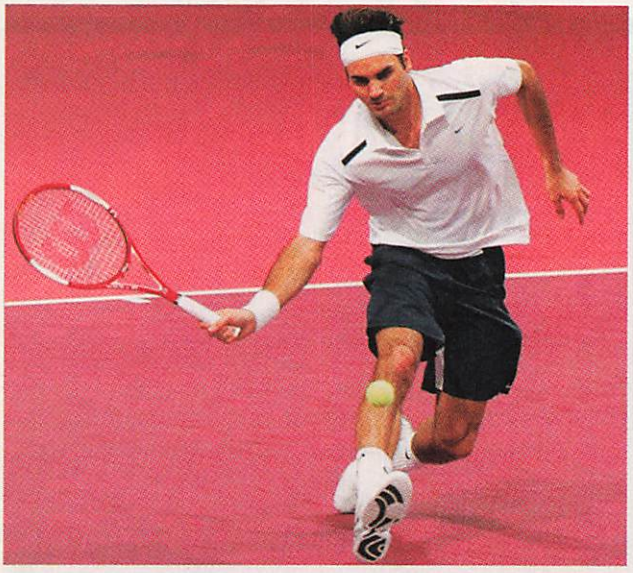
WORLD SERIES ratings hit an alltime low this season—down 9% from the previous bottom, achieved in 2005—but no one in baseball was fretting about the health of the game, not in the wake of last week's announcement of a new five-year collective bargaining agreement that ensures labor peace until 2011. With record regular-season attendance (76 million) and soaring revenues ($5.2 billion this year, versus $3.6 million in '01), baseball is awash in cash, which is why the new agreement was the first in more than three decades reached without a work stoppage or the imminent threat of one.

While there were no significant changes to any part of the existing deal—most notably with respect to drug testing—the agreement continues to put generous sums of revenue-sharing proceeds into the pockets of small- and mid-market teams, which now have more resources than ever to compete for free agents. (Even the lowly Royals, who reportedly received $55 million in revenue sharing last year, can speak about entering the bidding for Japanese pitching phenom Daisuke Matsuzaka.) Moreover, all clubs have the wherewithal to lock up their best young players to long-term deals. "The value of premier first- and second-year players goes up a lot," says one National League G.M. "A player like [rookie Cardinals closer] Adam Wainwright *[top]* is absolutely untouchable now."

SALES PITCH Free agents like Clemens may cash in this winter.

One notable change in the new agreement is the elimination of the deadline for teams to re-sign arbitration-eligible free agents, which means that Roger Clemens and Barry Bonds can drag negotiations with the Astros and the Giants, respectively, well into the new year. That should drive up their prices, and premium free agents like pitchers Matsuzaka and A's lefthander Barry Zito can also expect huge paydays *(page 43)*. Ditto for second- and third-tier mound talents such as St. Louis postseason hero Jeff Suppan and the Rangers' Adam Eaton, who could command prices that the sport hasn't seen since the boom free-agent market of 2001. (Is that $9 million per we hear? $10 million?) Suddenly, the recent moves by the Twins and the Yankees to pick up $12 million and $13 million options on outfielders Torii Hunter and Gary Sheffield look like steals. "Get set for some crazy contracts," says the NL G.M. "It's going to be a seller's market because everyone's got money to spend."

—Albert Chen



For the Record

Won By Roger Federer *(above)*, the Swiss Indoors in his hometown of Basel, Switzerland, his fourth straight title and 11th of the year. The world's No. 1 player defeated Chile's Fernando Gonzalez in straight sets on Sunday for his first win at the Indoors, which he worked as a ball boy as a kid. He hasn't lost a match since being upset by Andy Murray in August and is the first player in the Open era to win at least 10 titles in three straight years. "It is indeed magnificent," he said. "Different countries, different titles, they all have a different meaning. Winning Basel, my home tournament, it's one of those moments I'll never forget."

Played Against the Rams on Sunday, Chargers linebacker Shawne Merriman—even though he reportedly tested positive for the steroid nandrolone. The 2005 NFL Defensive Rookie of the Year, who had three sacks against St. Louis, faces a four-game suspension but is free to practice and play while he appeals the failed test. (The appeal will be heard on Nov. 7.) Merriman's lawyer, David Cornwell, said last week that a tainted dietary supplement triggered the failed test: "He did not go into the back alley somewhere and put a needle in his butt."

Sued By Cowboys receivers coach Todd Haley, McDonald's, after Haley's wife, Christine, allegedly found a dead rat in a salad she bought at a franchise in Southlake, Texas. The suit states that Christine was eating with the family's au pair when they discovered the rodent, "whiskers, feet, open-mouth and all." Both women say they became sick. According to the suit, which seeks at least $1.7 million in damages, "The tremendous horror translates into continuing gastric distress."

Apologized To Rockets center Dikembe Mutombo for uttering a racial slur during a game, Magic season-ticket holder Hooman Hamzehloui. During a game in Orlando last Thursday, Hamzehloui called Mutombo a "monkey." Mutombo had to be restrained by teammates from going into the stands. In a letter to Mutombo, Hamzehloui, a real estate agent, apologized, saying he didn't realize the word was a racial insult. He also pledged $5,000 to a charity of Mutombo's choice and vowed not to attend another Magic game until Mutombo told him it was O.K. Mutombo said he has forgiven Hamzehloui, but on Monday the league banned him from all NBA games this season.

Go Figure

2 NFL teams that have started consecutive seasons 7–0: the 1929, '30 and '31 Packers, and the 2005 and '06 Colts.

26–18 The Dolphins' record since 2002, the year running back Ricky Williams joined the team, when he has been in the lineup.

7–20 The Dolphins' record since '02 when Williams hasn't been with the team; he played this season in the CFL while serving a yearlong suspension from the NFL.

8 Starters on the Navy defense that 6' 4", 233-pound Notre Dame quarterback Brady Quinn outweighed when the teams met last Saturday; Quinn, who was taller than every Navy defensive player, led the Irish to a 38–14 win.

Trevor Berbick

1954–2006

TREVOR BERBICK was an accomplished fighter—he had a record of 50-11-1 and won the WBC heavyweight title in 1986—but he's best known as the degree of separation between two boxing immortals. Berbick, who was the victim of an apparent homicide in Jamaica last Saturday, was one of two men to fight both Muhammad Ali and Mike Tyson. (Larry Holmes is the other.) In '81, Berbick won a decision over Ali in what turned out to be the Greatest's final bout. Five years later Berbick was flattened by a 20-year-old Tyson, losing his belt in his first defense.

TITLE TRACK Future champ Berbick (left) made his name by beating Ali in '81.

In the 1990s, Berbick was convicted of sexual assault, grand theft and burglary and served 15 months in jail. Details of his life outside the ring were always foggy, and the same is true of his death. (Berbick's birth date is a mystery; he once said, "I'm a spirit. I have no age." He's believed to have been 52 when he died.) His body, which had chop wounds on the back of the head, was found near his family home in a Kingston suburb. Jamaican police arrested a neighbor who, they said, may have had a land dispute with Berbick. Said C. Lloyd Allen, a former president of the Jamaica Boxing Board and a friend of Berbick's, "Once [Trevor] lost to Tyson, he just went down a slippery slope."

JEAN FRANCOIS FREY/MAXPPP/ZUMA PRESS (FEDERER); KEN REGAN/CAMERA 5 (BERBICK)

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Scorecard

Halted By Twins lefthander Francisco Liriano *(above)*, his rehabilitation from the elbow injury that ended his season. Liriano, 23, was 12–3 with a 2.16 ERA as a rookie this year, but a strained ligament in his pitching arm put him on the disabled list for five weeks in midsummer and then forced him to stop pitching three weeks before Minnesota faced Oakland in the AL Division Series. He hoped the injury could be treated with rest and exercise, but he has made little progress. If he goes under the knife, Liriano could miss next season.

Waived By the Knicks, forward Jalen Rose. The team reached an agreement to buy out the last year of his contract, which was worth $16.9 million. Rose, a 12-year vet who averaged 12.7 points per game for New York last year, started four preseason games but took only two shots.

Accepted By the United States, an invitation to play in the Copa America soccer tournament next summer in Venezuela. The Copa America determines the champion of South America, but it isn't unusual for teams from North America to be invited to the field, which is likely to include heavyweights Argentina and Brazil. The last time the U.S. played in the Copa was in 1995, when it finished fourth. "The tournament offers the dual advantage of quality opponents and a challenging environment that will provide long-term benefits for our team," U.S. Soccer Federation president Sunil Gulati said.

Dotted By Jack Nicklaus at halftime of Ohio State's win over Minnesota last Saturday, the *i* in the Buckeye band's Script Ohio routine. Nicklaus *(left)*, who grew up in suburban Columbus and played for the Ohio State golf team from 1959 to '61, is the fifth non–band member to perform the honor, which has been a school tradition since 1935. (Others included Bob Hope and Woody Hayes. A sousaphone player is usually the dotter.) Nicklaus wore a black baseball cap with a red *O* logo, an homage to the one worn by his friend Hayes, the late Buckeyes coach. "I had to have my Woody hat," he said. "I was a big fan of Woody's. I was here when Woody dotted the *i*."

Interrupted The PGA Tour's Chrysler Championship, by two juvenile burglary suspects who led police on a chase through the course. The youths, suspects in the robbery of a house near the Innisbrook Golf Resort in Palm Harbor, Fla., tried to blend in with the gallery during the second round of the Chrysler last Friday morning. When they were discovered without tournament badges, they ran from police into the woods, and at one point the chase interrupted the round of Brian Gay as he prepared to tee off on the 3rd hole. "The cops were racing up in a cart, running through the bushes and holding their gun," said Gay, who was leading the tournament at the time but finished tied for ninth. "We had to get out of the way." Only one of the suspects was caught.

Sure Thing of the Week

THE YEAR'S biggest horse racing story has had little to do with actual horse racing: Handicappers and nonrailbirds alike have been transfixed by Barbaro's recovery from the gruesome leg injury he suffered at the Preakness. (After surgery to repair a shattered leg and an ensuing case of laminitis, the Kentucky Derby winner is recovering nicely at a hospital in Pennsylvania.) Meanwhile, the horse whose Preakness victory was overshadowed by Barbaro *(above)* is on one of the most impressive runs the sport has seen. Bernardini *(left)* has won his three starts since the Preakness handily, and he'll enter Saturday's 1¼-mile Breeders' Cup Classic as the heavy favorite. His toughest opponent will be Lava Man, but that California colt will probably fade in the long Churchill Downs stretch. Bernardini should clinch Horse of the Year honors and, finally, a share of the spotlight that has shone on Barbaro.

Joe Niekro

1944–2006

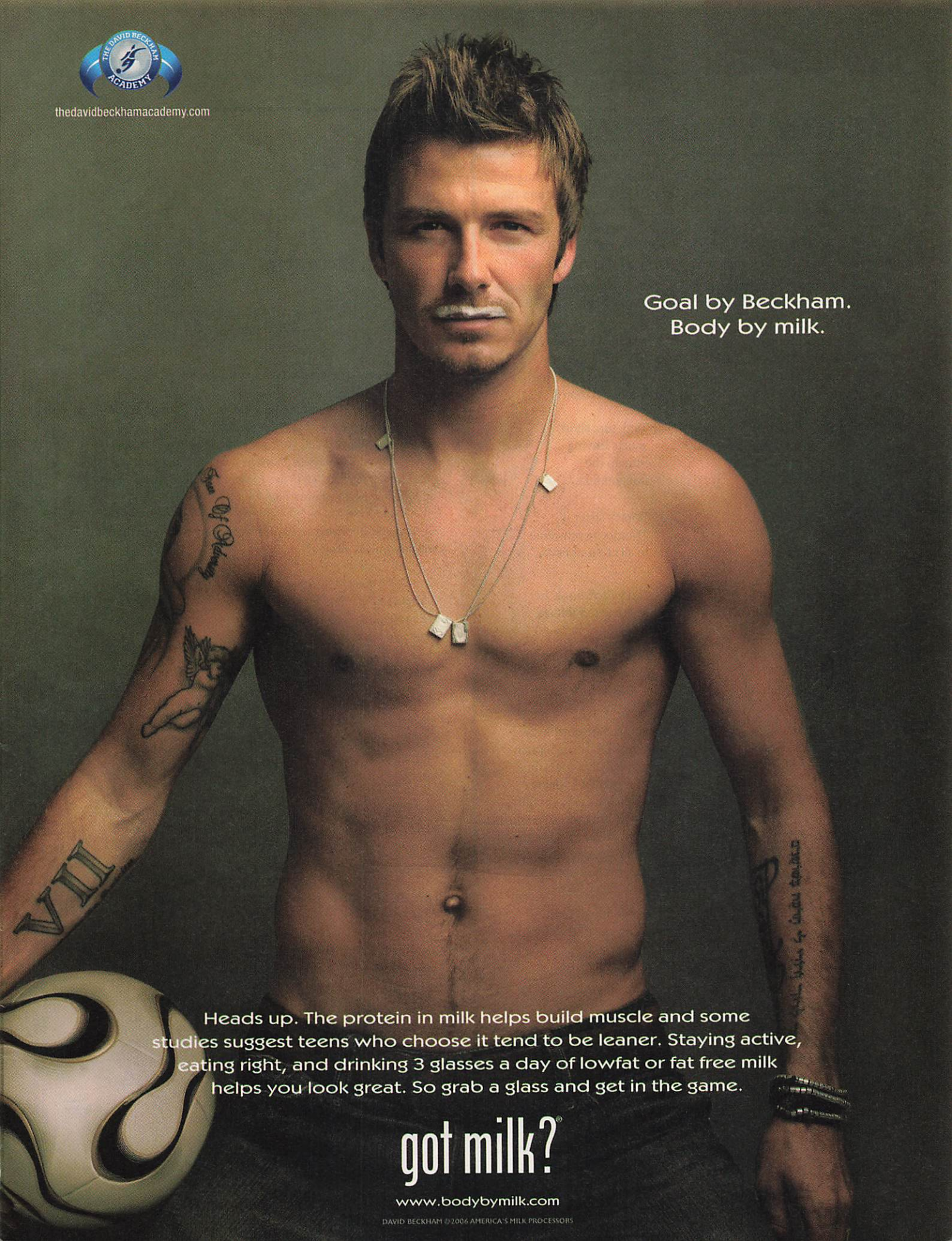
TO MANY the enduring image of Joe Niekro is the 42-year-old's getting busted with an emery board in his back pocket during a 1987 game. Niekro, who died last Friday of a brain aneurysm at age 61, swore that he was using the file for his nails and not to scuff the ball. There was reason to believe him: He'd already tried cheating, and it hadn't panned out. In '72 Niekro was a slider pitcher struggling to keep his job with the Tigers—never mind moving out of the shadow of his older brother, Phil. Detroit manager Billy Martin, tired of losing to spitballer Gaylord Perry, tried to get Niekro to master the spitter. Niekro couldn't, and he was waived twice in the next three years.

MAN AT WORK After learning the knuckler, Niekro (in 1980) had a franchise-best 144 wins in Houston.

The supremely laid-back Niekro ("It takes him an hour and a half to watch *60 Minutes*," a Houston exec once said) was claimed by the Astros in 1975. He ultimately perfected the knuckleball, the pitch his father, a coal miner, taught him and Phil in their backyard in Lansing, Ohio. From '77 through '84 Niekro averaged 16 wins per year. In '87 he and Phil broke the record for career wins by brothers, surpassing the mark of 529 set by Perry and his brother Jim.

Niekro retired in 1988, though he never ventured far from the game: His son Lance, 27, is a first baseman with the Giants. "He took great delight in Lance's baseball success," said Astros president Tal Smith. "I think he was a good mentor to Lance because things didn't come easily to Joe."

GEORGE WIDMAN/AP (BARBARO); GARY HERSHORN/ REUTERS (BERNARDINI); MATTHEW EMMONS/US PRESSWIRE (NICKLAUS); ANDY HAYT (NIEKRO); TOM DAHLIN/WIREIMAGE.COM (LIRIANO)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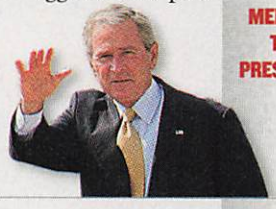
Skater vs. Instigator

SHE BECAME a hero in America when she won a figure skating silver medal at the Olympic Games in Torino. He became persona non grata in Kazakhstan when he created Borat, a fictional journalist whose exploits come to the big screen this week in *Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan*. Do Sasha Cohen and Sacha Baron Cohen have more in common than a name?

Sasha		Sacha
Milk. Reflection in her online journal: "I always wanted to be in a milk advertisement."	MOUSTACHE	Bushy. Wrote on *Maxim* website: "Ladies like very much big moustache. I wishing mine was more."
Sequined skirt leaving little to the imagination.	ATHLETIC ATTIRE	Tank top, short shorts leaving little to the imagination.
Came in 4th in 2002 Olympics.	FAMOUS FOURTH	Borat's sister is "Number 4 prostitute in all of Kazakhstan."
Silver medal from Turin.	PRIZED POSSESSION	*Baywatch* book he stole from a yard sale.
Appeared at Rodeo Drive Walk of Style last March.	RODEO INCIDENT	Butchered national anthem at a rodeo in Massachusetts.
Was a guest at the White House Easter Egg Roll last April. 	MEETING THE PRESIDENT	Showed up outside the White House in September and attempted, unsuccessfully, to deliver invitations to *Borat* (and a postfilm cocktail party at Hooters) to "George Walter Bush and other American dignitaries."
Skated to *Romeo and Juliet* in Turin.	MUSIC	Sang *Throw the Jew Down the Well* in Tucson.
Journal entry from Japan: "When I walk the streets of Tokyo I actually feel tall."	OVERSEAS TRAVEL	Arrived in U.S. with a live chicken in his suitcase.
Snowboarder Shaun (The Flying Tomato) White confessed he had a crush on her.	RED-HEADED ROMANCE	Cohen is engaged to *Wedding Crashers* star Isla Fisher.

Q&A

Bobby Cremins

The 59-year-old, who retired from Georgia Tech in 2000 after 19 seasons, is the new coach at the College of Charleston

SI: So why coach again after six years away from the game?

Cremins: When I was out of coaching, everybody asked, "Why are you not coaching?" Now that I'm back in, everybody asks, "Why did you get back in?" It's because basketball is in my blood. Being a TV analyst was fun, but I felt like I had something else left in me. I wanted another challenge, and I certainly got what I asked for.

SI: What did your years away from coaching teach you that will help you in this job?

Cremins: I think I'm a little different person. Hopefully, I'll be a little more patient. I made some mistakes late in my career at Georgia Tech. The program was slipping. We lost our edge and our swagger.

SI: Would you like to play against Georgia Tech?

Cremins: I'd have to think about that one. I'd love to coach against them in the NCAA tournament. [Georgia Tech coach] Paul Hewitt honored me by putting my name on the court. I think I'd be a little bit nervous playing on a court named after me.

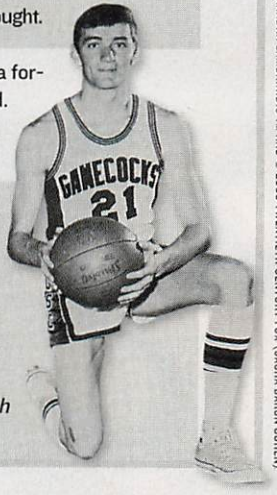
SI: While you were out of coaching, you were a columnist at *The Island Packet* on Hilton Head. [Cremins is a South Carolina alum.] Were you a good writer?

Cremins: I wrote about college basketball, mainly the SEC. I wrote some good articles, I thought.

SI: Your close friend Bob Cunningham, a former North Carolina player, recently died. How did his death affect your decision to return?

Cremins: It was not the only reason [I returned], but it really bothered me. The way he went so quickly. It kind of told me, Look, you're alive and you're healthy, why not get off your ass and see what you can contribute to society besides playing golf and tennis and swimming.

—*Richard Deitsch*



For more from Bobby Cremins, go to SI.com/scorecard.

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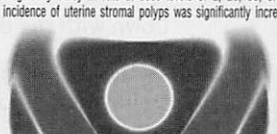
BRIEF SUMMARY: For full Prescribing Information, see package insert. **INDICATIONS AND USAGE** CRESTOR is indicated: 1. as an adjunct to diet to reduce elevated total-C, LDL-C, ApoB, nonHDL-C, and TG levels and to increase HDL-C in patients with primary hypercholesterolemia (heterozygous familial and nonfamilial) and mixed dyslipidemia (Fredrickson Type IIa and IIb); 2. as an adjunct to diet for the treatment of patients with elevated serum TG levels (Fredrickson Type IV); 3. to reduce LDL-C, total-C, and ApoB in patients with homozygous familial hypercholesterolemia as an adjunct to other lipid-lowering treatments (e.g., LDL apheresis) or if such treatments are unavailable. **CONTRAINDICATIONS** CRESTOR is contraindicated in patients with a known hypersensitivity to any component of this product. Rosuvastatin is contraindicated in patients with active liver disease or with unexplained persistent elevations of serum transaminases (see WARNINGS, Liver Enzymes). **Pregnancy and Lactation** Atherosclerosis is a chronic process and discontinuation of lipid-lowering drugs during pregnancy should have little impact on the outcome of long-term therapy of primary hypercholesterolemia. Cholesterol and other products of cholesterol biosynthesis are essential components for fetal development (including synthesis of steroids and cell membranes). Since HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors decrease cholesterol synthesis and possibly the synthesis of other biologically active substances derived from cholesterol, they may cause fetal harm when administered to pregnant women. Therefore, HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors are contraindicated during pregnancy and in nursing mothers. ROSUVASTATIN SHOULD BE ADMINISTERED TO WOMEN OF CHILDBEARING AGE ONLY WHEN SUCH PATIENTS ARE HIGHLY UNLIKELY TO CONCEIVE AND HAVE BEEN INFORMED OF THE POTENTIAL HAZARDS. If the patient becomes pregnant while taking this drug, therapy should be discontinued immediately and the patient apprised of the potential hazard to the fetus. **WARNINGS Liver Enzymes** HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors, like some other lipid-lowering therapies, have been associated with biochemical abnormalities of liver function. The incidence of persistent elevations (>3 times the upper limit of normal [ULN] occurring on 2 or more consecutive occasions) in serum transaminases in fixed dose studies was 0.4, 0, 0, and 0.1% in patients who received rosuvastatin 5, 10, 20, and 40 mg, respectively. In most cases, the elevations were transient and resolved or improved on continued therapy or after a brief interruption in therapy. There were two cases of jaundice, for which a relationship to rosuvastatin therapy could not be determined, which resolved after discontinuation of therapy. There were no cases of liver failure or irreversible liver disease in these trials. **It is recommended that liver function tests be performed before and at 12 weeks following both the initiation of therapy and any elevation of dose, and periodically (e.g., semiannually) thereafter.** Liver enzyme changes generally occur in the first 3 months of treatment with rosuvastatin. Patients who develop increased transaminase levels should be monitored until the abnormalities have resolved. Should an increase in ALT or AST of >3 times ULN persist, reduction of dose or withdrawal of rosuvastatin is recommended. Rosuvastatin should be used with caution in patients who consume substantial quantities of alcohol and/or have a history of liver disease (see CLINICAL PHARMACOLOGY, Special Populations, Hepatic Insufficiency). Active liver disease or unexplained persistent transaminase elevations are contraindications to the use of rosuvastatin (see CONTRAINDICATIONS). **Myopathy/Rhabdomyolysis Rare cases of rhabdomyolysis with acute renal failure secondary to myoglobinuria have been reported with rosuvastatin and with other drugs in this class.** Uncomplicated myalgia has been reported in rosuvastatin-treated patients (see ADVERSE REACTIONS). Creatine kinase (CK) elevations (>10 times upper limit of normal) occurred in 0.2% to 0.4% of patients taking rosuvastatin at doses up to 40 mg in clinical studies. Treatment-related myopathy, defined as muscle aches or muscle weakness in conjunction with increases in CK values >10 times upper limit of normal, was reported in up to 0.1% of patients taking rosuvastatin doses of up to 40 mg in clinical studies. In clinical trials, the incidence of myopathy and rhabdomyolysis increased at doses of rosuvastatin above the recommended dosage range (5 to 40 mg). In postmarketing experience, effects on skeletal muscle, e.g. uncomplicated myalgia, myopathy and, rarely, rhabdomyolysis have been reported in patients treated with HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors including rosuvastatin. As with other HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors, reports of rhabdomyolysis with rosuvastatin are rare, but higher at the highest marketed dose (40 mg). Factors that may predispose patients to myopathy with HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors include advanced age (≥65 years), hypothyroidism, and renal insufficiency. Consequently: 1. Rosuvastatin should be prescribed with caution in patients with predisposing factors for myopathy, such as, renal impairment (see DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION), advanced age, and inadequately treated hypothyroidism. 2. Patients should be advised to promptly report unexplained muscle pain, tenderness, or weakness, particularly if accompanied by malaise or fever. Rosuvastatin therapy should be discontinued if markedly elevated CK levels occur or myopathy is diagnosed or suspected. 3. The 40 mg dose of rosuvastatin is reserved only for those patients who have not achieved their LDL-C goal utilizing the 20 mg dose of rosuvastatin once daily (see DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION). 4. The risk of myopathy during treatment with rosuvastatin may be increased with concurrent administration of other lipid-lowering therapies or cyclosporine, (see CLINICAL PHARMACOLOGY, Drug Interactions, PRECAUTIONS, Drug Interactions, and DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION). **The benefit of further alterations in lipid levels by the combined use of rosuvastatin with fibrates or niacin should be carefully weighed against the potential risks of this combination. Combination therapy with rosuvastatin and gemfibrozil should generally be avoided. (See DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION and PRECAUTIONS, Drug Interactions).** 5. **The risk of myopathy during treatment with rosuvastatin may be increased in circumstances which increase rosuvastatin drug levels (see CLINICAL PHARMACOLOGY, Special Populations, Race and Renal Insufficiency, and PRECAUTIONS, General).** 6. **Rosuvastatin therapy should also be temporarily withheld in any patient with an acute, serious condition suggestive of myopathy or predisposing to the development of renal failure secondary to rhabdomyolysis (e.g., sepsis, hypotension, dehydration, major surgery, trauma, severe metabolic, endocrine, and electrolyte disorders, or uncontrolled seizures). PRECAUTIONS General** Before instituting therapy with rosuvastatin, an attempt should be made to control hypercholesterolemia with appropriate diet and exercise, weight reduction in obese patients, and treatment of underlying medical problems (see INDICATIONS AND USAGE). Administration of rosuvastatin 20 mg to patients with severe renal impairment (CL_{cr} <30 mL/min/1.73 m^2) resulted in a 3-fold increase in plasma concentrations of rosuvastatin compared with healthy volunteers (see WARNINGS, Myopathy/Rhabdomyolysis and DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION). The result of a large pharmacokinetic study conducted in the US demonstrated an approximate 2-fold elevation in median exposure in Asian subjects (having either Filipino, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese or Asian-Indian origin) compared with a Caucasian control group. This increase should be considered when making rosuvastatin dosing decisions for Asian patients. (See WARNINGS, Myopathy/Rhabdomyolysis; CLINICAL PHARMACOLOGY, Special Populations, Race, and DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION.) **Information for Patients** Patients should be advised to report promptly unexplained muscle pain, tenderness, or weakness, particularly if accompanied by malaise or fever. When taking rosuvastatin with an aluminum and magnesium hydroxide combination antacid, the antacid should be taken at least 2 hours after rosuvastatin administration (see CLINICAL PHARMACOLOGY, Drug Interactions). **Laboratory Tests** In the rosuvastatin clinical trial program, dipstick-positive proteinuria and microscopic hematuria were observed among rosuvastatin-treated patients, predominantly in patients dosed above the recommended dose range (i.e., 80 mg). However, this finding was more frequent in patients taking rosuvastatin 40 mg, when compared to lower doses of rosuvastatin or comparator statins, though it was generally transient and was not associated with worsening renal function. Although the clinical significance of this finding is unknown, a dose reduction should be considered for patients on rosuvastatin 40 mg therapy with unexplained persistent proteinuria during routine urinalysis testing. **Drug Interactions Cyclosporine:** When rosuvastatin 10 mg was coadministered with cyclosporine in cardiac transplant patients, rosuvastatin mean C_{max} and mean AUC were increased 11-fold and 7-fold, respectively, compared with healthy volunteers. These increases are considered to be clinically significant and require special consideration in the dosing of rosuvastatin to patients taking concomitant cyclosporine (see WARNINGS, Myopathy/Rhabdomyolysis, and DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION). **Warfarin:** Coadministration of rosuvastatin to patients on stable warfarin therapy resulted in clinically significant rises in INR (>4, baseline 2-3). In patients taking coumarin anticoagulants and rosuvastatin concomitantly, INR should be determined before starting rosuvastatin and frequently enough during early therapy to ensure that no significant alteration of INR occurs. Once a stable INR time has been documented, INR can be monitored at the intervals usually recommended for patients on coumarin anticoagulants. If the dose of rosuvastatin is changed, the same procedure should be repeated. Rosuvastatin therapy has not been associated with bleeding or with changes in INR in patients not taking anticoagulants. **Gemfibrozil:** Coadministration of a single rosuvastatin dose to healthy volunteers on gemfibrozil (600 mg twice daily) resulted in a 2.2- and 1.9-fold, respectively, increase in mean C_{max} and mean AUC of rosuvastatin (see DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION). **Endocrine Function** Although clinical studies have shown that rosuvastatin alone does not reduce basal plasma cortisol concentration or impair adrenal reserve, caution should be exercised if any HMG-CoA reductase inhibitor or other agent used to lower cholesterol levels is administered concomitantly with drugs that may decrease the levels or activity of endogenous steroid hormones such as ketoconazole, spironolactone, and cimetidine. **CNS Toxicity** CNS vascular lesions, characterized by perivascular hemorrhages, edema, and mononuclear cell infiltration of perivascular spaces, have been observed in dogs treated with several other members of this drug class. A chemically similar drug in this class produced dose-dependent optic nerve degeneration (Wallerian degeneration of retinogeniculate fibers) in dogs, at a dose that produced plasma drug levels about 30 times higher than the mean drug level in humans taking the highest recommended dose. Edema, hemorrhage, and partial necrosis in the interstitium of the choroid plexus was observed in a female dog sacrificed moribund at day 24 at 90 mg/kg/day by oral gavage (systemic exposures 100 times the human exposure at 40 mg/day based on AUC comparisons). Corneal opacity was seen in dogs treated for 52 weeks at 6 mg/kg/day by oral gavage (systemic exposures 20 times the human exposure at 40 mg/day based on AUC comparisons). Cataracts were seen in dogs treated for 12 weeks by oral gavage at 30 mg/kg/day (systemic exposures 60 times the human exposure at 40 mg/day based on AUC comparisons). Retinal dysplasia and retinal loss were seen in dogs treated for 4 weeks by oral gavage at 90 mg/kg/day (systemic exposures 100 times the human exposure at 40 mg/day based on AUC). Doses ≤30 mg/kg/day (systemic exposures ≤60 times the human exposure at 40 mg/day based on AUC comparisons) following treatment up to one year, did not reveal retinal findings. **Carcinogenesis, Mutagenesis, Impairment of Fertility** In a 104-week carcinogenicity study in rats at dose levels of 2, 20, 60, or 80 mg/kg/day by oral gavage, the incidence of uterine stromal polyps was significantly increased in females at



CRESTOR®

rosuvastatin calcium

80 mg/kg/day at systemic exposure 20 times the human exposure at 40 mg/day based on AUC. Increased incidence of polyps was not seen at lower doses. In a 107-week carcinogenicity study in mice given 10, 60, 200 mg/kg/day by oral gavage, an increased incidence of hepatocellular adenoma/carcinoma was observed at 200 mg/kg/day at systemic exposures 20 times human exposure at 40 mg/day based on AUC. An increased incidence of hepatocellular tumors was not seen at lower doses. Rosuvastatin was not mutagenic or clastogenic with or without metabolic activation in the Ames test with *Salmonella typhimurium* and *Escherichia coli*, the mouse lymphoma assay, and the chromosomal aberration assay in Chinese hamster lung cells. Rosuvastatin was negative in the *in vivo* mouse micronucleus test. In rat fertility studies with oral gavage doses of 5, 15, 50 mg/kg/day, males were treated for 9 weeks prior to and throughout mating and females were treated 2 weeks prior to mating and throughout mating until gestation day 7. No adverse effect on fertility was observed at 50 mg/kg/day (systemic exposures up to 10 times human exposure at 40 mg/day based on AUC comparisons). In testicles of dogs treated with rosuvastatin at 30 mg/kg/day for one month, spermatidic giant cells were seen. Spermatidic giant cells were observed in monkeys after 6-month treatment at 30 mg/kg/day in addition to vacuolation of seminiferous tubular epithelium. Exposures in the dog were 20 times and in the monkey 10 times human exposure at 40 mg/day based on body surface area comparisons. Similar findings have been seen with other drugs in this class. **Pregnancy** ***Pregnancy Category X*** See CONTRAINDICATIONS. Rosuvastatin may cause fetal harm when administered to a pregnant woman. Rosuvastatin is contraindicated in women who are or may become pregnant. Safety in pregnant women has not been established. There are no adequate and well-controlled studies of rosuvastatin in pregnant women. Rosuvastatin crosses the placenta and is found in fetal tissue and amniotic fluid at 3% and 20%, respectively, of the maternal plasma concentration following a single 25 mg/kg oral gavage dose on gestation day 16 in rats. A higher fetal tissue distribution (25% maternal plasma concentration) was observed in rabbits after a single oral gavage dose of 1 mg/kg on gestation day 18. If this drug is administered to a woman with reproductive potential, the patient should be apprised of the potential hazard to a fetus. In female rats given oral gavage doses of 5, 15, 50 mg/kg/day rosuvastatin before mating and continuing through day 7 postcoitus results in decreased fetal body weight (female pups) and delayed ossification at the high dose (systemic exposures 10 times human exposure at 40 mg/day based on AUC comparisons). In pregnant rats given oral gavage doses of 2, 20, 50 mg/kg/day from gestation day 7 through lactation day 21 (weaning), decreased pup survival occurred in groups given 50 mg/kg/day, systemic exposures ≥12 times human exposure at 40 mg/day based on body surface area comparisons. In pregnant rabbits given oral gavage doses of 0.3, 1, 3 mg/kg/day from gestation day 6 to lactation day 18 (weaning), exposures equivalent to human exposure at 40 mg/day based on body surface area comparisons, decreased fetal viability and maternal mortality was observed. Rosuvastatin was not teratogenic in rats at ≤25 mg/kg/day or in rabbits ≤3 mg/kg/day (systemic exposures equivalent to human exposure at 40 mg/day based on AUC or body surface comparison, respectively). **Nursing Mothers** It is not known whether rosuvastatin is excreted in human milk. Studies in lactating rats have demonstrated that rosuvastatin is secreted into breast milk at levels 3 times higher than that obtained in the plasma following oral gavage dosing. Because many drugs are excreted in human milk and because of the potential for serious adverse reactions in nursing infants from rosuvastatin, a decision should be made whether to discontinue nursing or administration of rosuvastatin taking into account the importance of the drug to the lactating woman. **Pediatric Use** The safety and effectiveness in pediatric patients have not been established. Treatment experience with rosuvastatin in a pediatric population is limited to 8 patients with homozygous FH. None of these patients was below 8 years of age. **Geriatric Use** Of the 10,275 patients in clinical studies with rosuvastatin, 3,159 (31%) were 65 years and older, and 698 (6.8%) were 75 years and older. The overall frequency of adverse events and types of adverse events were similar in patients above and below 65 years of age. (See WARNINGS, Myopathy/Rhabdomyolysis.) The efficacy of rosuvastatin in the geriatric population (≥65 years of age) was comparable to the efficacy observed in the non-elderly. **ADVERSE REACTIONS** Rosuvastatin is generally well tolerated. Adverse reactions have usually been mild and transient. In clinical studies of 10,275 patients, 3.7% were discontinued due to adverse experiences attributable to rosuvastatin. The most frequent adverse events thought to be related to rosuvastatin were myalgia, constipation, asthenia, abdominal pain, and nausea. **Clinical Adverse Experiences** Adverse experiences, regardless of causality assessment, reported in ≥2% of patients in placebo-controlled clinical studies of rosuvastatin are shown in Table 1; discontinuations due to adverse events in these studies of up to 12 weeks duration occurred in 3% of patients on rosuvastatin and 5% on placebo.

Table 1. Adverse Events in Placebo-Controlled Studies

Adverse event	Rosuvastatin N=744	Placebo N=382
Pharyngitis	9.0	7.6
Headache	5.5	5.0
Diarrhea	3.4	2.9
Dyspepsia	3.4	3.1
Nausea	3.4	3.1
Myalgia	2.8	1.3
Asthenia	2.7	2.6
Back pain	2.6	2.4
Flu syndrome	2.3	1.8
Urinary tract infection	2.3	1.6
Rhinitis	2.2	2.1
Sinusitis	2.0	1.8

In addition, the following adverse events were reported, regardless of causality assessment, in ≥1% of 10,275 patients treated with rosuvastatin in clinical studies. The events in *italics* occurred in ≥2% of these patients. **Body as a Whole:** *Abdominal pain, accidental injury, chest pain, infection, pain,* pelvic pain, and neck pain. **Cardiovascular System:** *Hypertension,* angina pectoris, vasodilatation, and palpitation. **Digestive System:** *Constipation, gastroenteritis,* vomiting, flatulence, periodontal abscess, and gastritis. **Endocrine:** Diabetes mellitus. **Hemic and Lymphatic System:** Anemia and ecchymosis. **Metabolic and Nutritional Disorders:** *Peripheral edema.* **Musculoskeletal System:** *Arthritis, arthralgia,* and pathological fracture. **Nervous System:** *Dizziness, insomnia, hypertonia, paresthesia, depression,* anxiety, vertigo, and neuralgia. **Respiratory System:** *Bronchitis, cough increased,* dyspnea, pneumonia, and asthma. **Skin and Appendages:** *Rash* and pruritus. **Laboratory Abnormalities:** In the rosuvastatin clinical trial program, dipstick-positive proteinuria and microscopic hematuria were observed among rosuvastatin-treated patients, predominantly in patients dosed above the recommended dose range (i.e., 80 mg). However, this finding was more frequent in patients taking rosuvastatin 40 mg, when compared to lower doses of rosuvastatin or comparator statins, though it was generally transient and was not associated with worsening renal function. (See PRECAUTIONS, Laboratory Tests.) Other abnormal laboratory values reported were elevated creatinine phosphokinase, transaminases, hyperglycemia, glutamyl transpeptidase, alkaline phosphatase, bilirubin, and thyroid function abnormalities. Other adverse events reported less frequently than 1% in the rosuvastatin clinical study program, regardless of causality assessment, included arrhythmia, hepatitis, hypersensitivity reactions (i.e., face edema, thrombocytopenia, leukopenia, vesiculobullous rash, urticaria, and angioedema), kidney failure, syncope, myasthenia, myositis, pancreatitis, photosensitivity reaction, myopathy, and rhabdomyolysis. **Postmarketing Experience** In addition to the events reported above, as with other drugs in this class, the following event has been reported during post-marketing experience with CRESTOR, regardless of causality assessment: very rare cases of jaundice. **OVERDOSAGE** There is no specific treatment in the event of overdose. In the event of overdose, the patient should be treated symptomatically and supportive measures instituted as required. Hemodialysis does not significantly enhance clearance of rosuvastatin. **DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION** The patient should be placed on a standard cholesterol-lowering diet before receiving CRESTOR and should continue on this diet during treatment. CRESTOR can be administered as a single dose at any time of day, with or without food. **Hypercholesterolemia (Heterozygous Familial and Nonfamilial) and Mixed Dyslipidemia (Fredrickson Type IIa and IIb)** The dose range for CRESTOR is 5 to 40 mg once daily. Therapy with CRESTOR should be individualized according to goal of therapy and response. The usual recommended starting dose of CRESTOR is 10 mg once daily. However, initiation of therapy with 5 mg once daily should be considered for patients requiring less aggressive LDL-C reductions, who have predisposing factors for myopathy, and as noted below for special populations such as patients taking cyclosporine, Asian patients, and patients with severe renal insufficiency (see CLINICAL PHARMACOLOGY, Race, and Renal Insufficiency, and Drug Interactions. For patients with marked hypercholesterolemia (LDL-C >190 mg/dL) and aggressive lipid targets, a 20-mg starting dose may be considered. After initiation and/or upon titration of CRESTOR, lipid levels should be analyzed within 2 to 4 weeks and dosage adjusted accordingly. **The 40-mg dose of CRESTOR is reserved only for those patients who have not achieved their LDL-C goal utilizing the 20 mg dose of CRESTOR once daily (see WARNINGS, Myopathy/Rhabdomyolysis). When initiating statin therapy or switching from another statin therapy, the appropriate CRESTOR starting dose should first be utilized, and only then titrated according to the patient's individualized goal of therapy. Homozygous Familial Hypercholesterolemia** The recommended starting dose of CRESTOR is 20 mg once daily in patients with homozygous FH. The maximum recommended daily dose is 40 mg. CRESTOR should be used in these patients as an adjunct to other lipid-lowering treatments (e.g., LDL apheresis) or if such treatments are unavailable. Response to therapy should be estimated from pre-apheresis LDL-C levels. **Dosage in Asian Patients** Initiation of CRESTOR therapy with 5 mg once daily should be considered for Asian patients. The potential for increased systemic exposures relative to Caucasians is relevant when considering escalation of dose in cases where hypercholesterolemia is not adequately controlled at doses of 5, 10, or 20 mg once daily. (See WARNINGS, Myopathy/Rhabdomyolysis, CLINICAL PHARMACOLOGY, Special Populations, Race, and PRECAUTIONS, General). **Dosage in Patients Taking Cyclosporine** In patients taking cyclosporine, therapy should be limited to CRESTOR 5 mg once daily (see WARNINGS, Myopathy/Rhabdomyolysis, and PRECAUTIONS, Drug Interactions). **Concomitant Lipid-Lowering Therapy** The effect of CRESTOR on LDL-C and total-C may be enhanced when used in combination with a bile acid binding resin. If CRESTOR is used in combination with gemfibrozil, the dose of CRESTOR should be limited to 10 mg once daily (see WARNINGS, Myopathy/Rhabdomyolysis, and PRECAUTIONS, Drug Interactions). **Dosage in Patients With Renal Insufficiency** No modification of dosage is necessary for patients with mild to moderate renal insufficiency. For patients with severe renal impairment (CL_{cr} <30 mL/min/1.73 m^2) not on hemodialysis, dosing of CRESTOR should be started at 5 mg once daily and not to exceed 10 mg once daily (see PRECAUTIONS, General, and CLINICAL PHARMACOLOGY, Special Populations, Renal Insufficiency).

NOTE: This summary provides important information about CRESTOR. For more information, please ask your doctor or health care professional about the full Prescribing Information and discuss it with them.

Rx only

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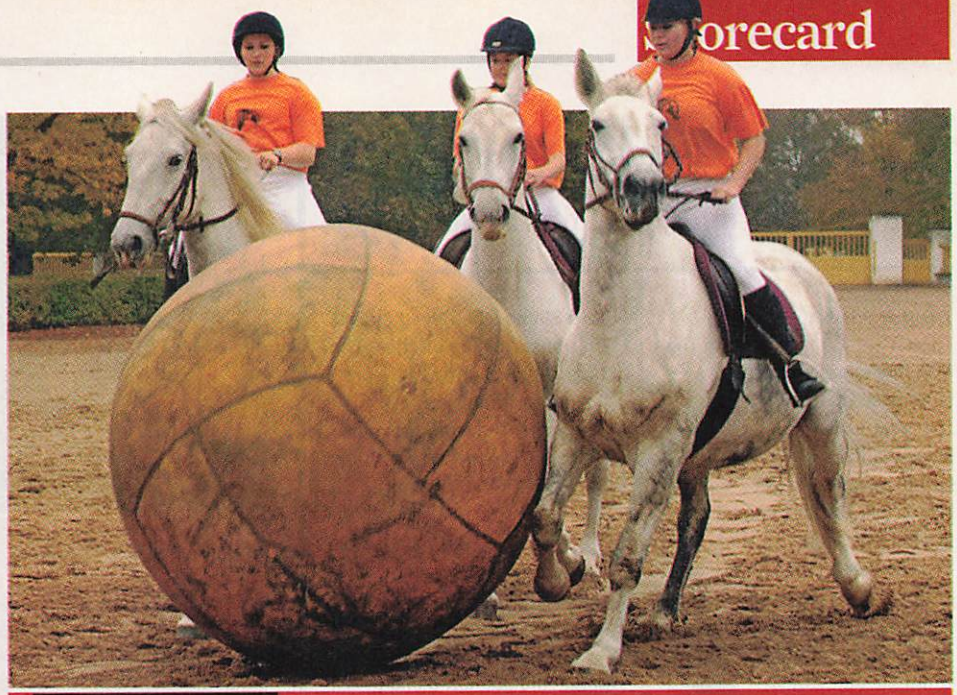
The Beat

By Adam Duerson



PICTURE THIS If Ralph Lauren had spent his teens at the Agricultural High School in Kladruby nad Labem, Czech Republic, people might be wearing push-ball shirts, not polo shirts. Pushball—think rugby on horseback, with a 55-pound ball—is part of gym class for these Czech kids. The game was invented in Newton, Mass., in 1894 but never became fashionable here or terribly popular there: This is the only pushball in the Republic.

WHAT WAS it that **Muhammad Ali** once boasted? That he could float like a butterfly and sing like a bee? Not exactly, but in a new book former *Esquire* art director **George Lois** argues that the Greatest was the first hip-hop artist. *Ali Rap*, which hits stores on Nov. 2, is an illustrated collection of lyrical Ali quotes in chronological order, starting with what Lois presents as his first verse: "This guy is done, I'll beat him in one," a threat the 12-year-old Cassius Clay made before his first fight. On Dec. 9 ESPN will air a special based on the book with readings by **Kareem Abdul-Jabbar** and **Sidney Poitier**, and a performance of an Ali-inspired song by host **Chuck D**. "He communicated in all sorts of ways at once," says Chuck D.

■ Cardinals quarterback **Matt Leinart** skipped practice on Oct. 25 to be with former girlfriend **Brynn Cameron** in Southern California, where she gave birth to their son, **Cole**. "It was a great experience," Leinart said. "Now my next job is to be a great dad." The 2004 Heisman Trophy winner started dating Cameron, 20, in February 2005, while he was still at USC, but they separated last April. When news of Cameron's pregnancy broke in August, her father, **Stan**, told reporters that her next step would be to "finish school and let Matt do his thing and then figure it out." Cameron *(left)*, a junior guard for the Trojans' women's hoops team, will sit out this season as a redshirt.

■ Chargers receiver **Kassim Osgood** knows what it takes to have a good entourage—he employs a college friend as his "go-get-it guy," and he keeps pals around to help him "maintain the course and stay focused." Now he'll get a chance to use his expertise in HBO's *Entourage*. Osgood won a walk-on role at a charity auction (he bid $11,000 to benefit the San Diego Sports Medicine Foundation for Children, which aids underprivileged kids who suffer sports-related injuries) and is scheduled to appear next season.

■ Will there soon be a new stop on the talk-show circuit? Oprah, Ellen, Jay and Dave may be joined by Stephon. Armed with a reel of demo interviews, including a chat with **Kobe Bryant**, Knicks guard **Stephon Marbury**, who runs hot and cold as an interview subject himself, has been pitching his own TV talk show. "We've had offers," Marbury told the *New York Post*. "We just haven't taken anything." . . . According to *The Palm Beach Post*, **Greg Norman** and **Chris Evert**, both 51, are romantically involved and will attend Evert's charity event in Boca Raton, Fla., next week together. (Reps for both said they're just friends.) Norman, who once employed Evert's brother as a caddie, separated from his wife of 25 years, Laura, earlier this year. Last week Evert, winner of 18 Grand Slam singles titles, announced her divorce from ex–Olympic skier **Andy Mill** after 18 years of marriage.

SIGN OF THE APOCALYPSE

A Bulgarian soccer team ordered a volatile 19-year-old player to get married, believing that would force him to settle down.

They Said It

TIKI BARBER
Giants running back, upon hearing that Terrell Owens is writing a children's book called *Little T Learns to Share*:

"He may be drawing on someone else's experiences."

ALEXANDREA MLEJNKOVA/CTK/ABACAUSA.COM (PICTURE THIS); REX BROWN/WIREIMAGE.COM (BARBER); DAVID GONZALES (CAMERON)

Week Ahead

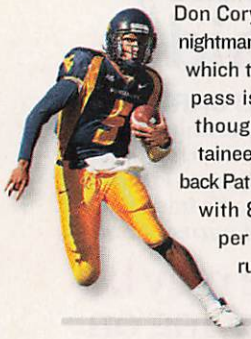
What to watch and watch for

By Chris Mannix

THURSDAY 11/2

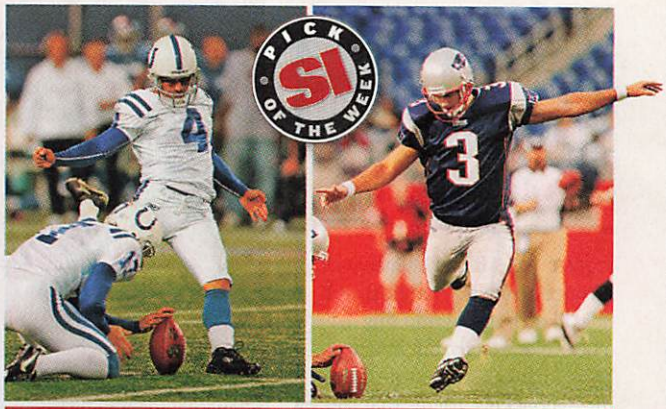
PGA Tour Championship The PGA Tour's season finale is supposed to feature the year's top 30 money winners, but withdrawals by Tiger Woods (No. 1 on the list), Phil Mickelson (fourth) and Stephen Ames (18th) have left the championship with its smallest field (27) ever. The favorite: Jim Furyk, who's second only to Woods in prize money and in per-round scoring average (68.94). **Thursday and Friday ESPN noon; Saturday ABC 3:30 p.m.; Sunday ESPN2 noon, ABC 1 p.m.**

No. 3 West Virginia at No. 5 Louisville The battle for first place in the Big East could turn out to be Don Coryell's worst nightmare: a game in which the forward pass is an afterthought. Mountaineers quarterback Pat White *(left)*, with 88.4 yards per game, and running back Steve Slaton (151.3) lead the nation's best rushing offense. The Cardinals will counter with a pretty good ground game of their own: They rank seventh in the country in rushing. **ESPN 7:30 p.m.**



Rob and Big MTV's latest reality experiment involves pro skateboarder Rob Dyrdek and his massive bodyguard Chris (Big Black) Boykin, who weighs 416 pounds. Cameras will follow the pair *(left)* as they live in Dyrdek's Hollywood Hills estate and try to solve life's most basic questions—like which of them can make a better breakfast. Let's hope Big Black stays off Dyrdek's boards. **MTV 10:30 p.m.**

Spurs at Mavericks What did San Antonio's coaching staff do this summer? They probably brainstormed ways to defend speedy Dallas guard Devin Harris, who ran circles around the Spurs defense and averaged 12.7 points in the Mavs' seven-game win over San Antonio in the Western Conference semifinals. The two West powers meet for the first of four times this season. **TNT 8 p.m.**



SUNDAY 11/5

Kicking Back

When the Colts visited Gillette Stadium last year, they snapped a six-game losing streak against the Patriots with a 40–21 win. This year in Foxborough, Indy will have the help of a New England Super Bowl hero. Kicker Adam Vinatieri *(left)* signed a five-year, $12 million contract with Indianapolis before the season, and he's been as advertised: perfect in 10 field goal attempts. His replacement? Let's just say the Patriots might kick themselves for letting Vinatieri go. Rookie Stephen Gostkowski *(right)* is 5 for 8 and has 32 points, which ranks 27th among the league's kickers. **NBC 8 p.m.**

SUNDAY 11/5

New York City Marathon It's not often that New Yorkers root for a Bostonian, but Deena Kastor, a native of the Boston suburb of Waltham, will have the crowd on her side at the 37th race through the five boroughs. Kastor *(right)*, who won the London Marathon last April and an Olympic bronze medal in Athens in 2004, will try to become the first U.S. woman to win New York since Miki Gorman in 1977. An American sweep is even possible: '04 Olympic silver medalist and Mammoth Lakes, Calif., resident Meb Keflezighi is one of the favorites on the men's side. **NBC 1:30 p.m.**

JIM MCISAAC/GETTY IMAGES (VINATIERI); MICHAEL VALERI/WIREIMAGE.COM (GOSTKOWSKI); MIKE FINN-KELCEY/REUTERS (KASTOR); JEFF GENTNER/AP (WHITE); COURTESY MTV (ROB AND BIG)

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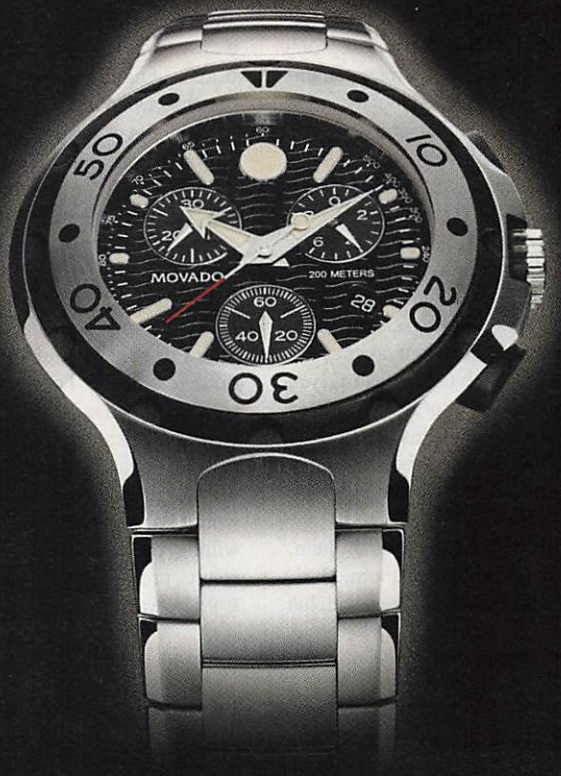

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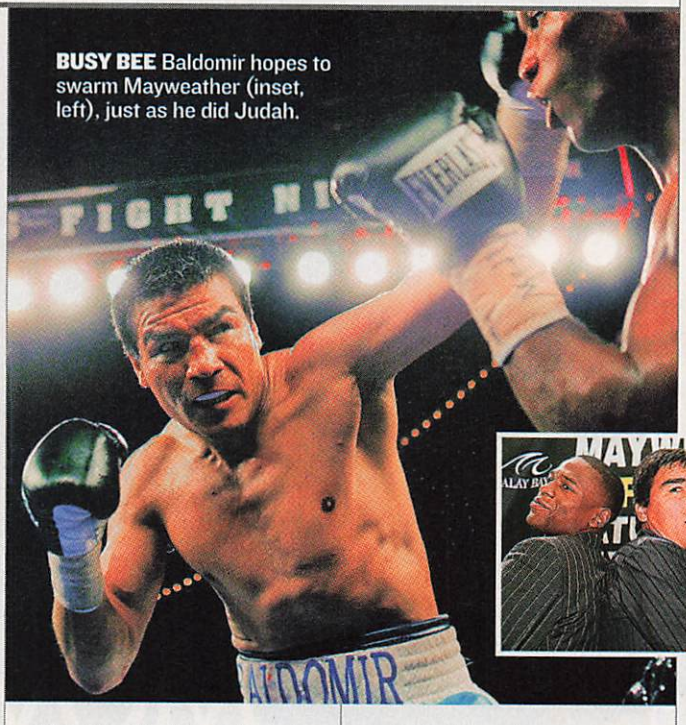
Having a Ball

Modern-day Cinderella Man Carlos Baldomir is going to find out soon if his glass slipper still fits

By Chris Mannix



BUSY BEE Baldomir hopes to swarm Mayweather (inset, left), just as he did Judah.

THE BEAT-UP Plymouth Voyager putters and sputters down La Brea Avenue, as unassuming a ride as any in car-mad Los Angeles. Pulling into the parking lot outside the Pound-4-Pound gym, the blue minivan grinds to a halt as empty water bottles, candy wrappers and a variety of children's toys roll around the faded interior. And then, from out of this *Pimp My Ride* reject steps the welterweight champion of the world.

For Carlos Baldomir the car—along with too many meager paydays and the disrespect that has dogged him all the way up to his fight this Saturday night with Floyd Mayweather—is a daily reminder of a life he has worked so long and hard to leave behind. At 35, he is boxing's modern Cinderella Man, James J. Braddock to Mayweather's Max Baer, a quiet fighter with a granite chin who prefers the comfort of family to the seclusion of training. He blends into a crowd as easily as Mayweather stands out, a T-shirt guy in a velvet-tux world. "Carlos Baldomir," says veteran trainer Teddy Atlas, "is proof that what doesn't glitter can still be gold."

Baldomir, who stands 5' 7", fights as a welterweight (147 pounds), trains as a middleweight (160) and occasionally vacations as a cruiserweight (180). His recall of a career that includes 58 professional fights in 13 years borders on encyclopedic *(Quick, Carlos, who did you fight in October of 1998? Dingaan Thobela!)* while his recollection of other topics can be a little fuzzy *(Quick, Carlos, what year did you get married? Ah . . .)*.

The son of a salesman, Juan, and a stay-at-home mom, Marion, Baldomir was raised with his older sister, Beatrice, in Santa Fe, Argentina. He first put on gloves at 13 because he admired Argentina's world middleweight champ Carlos Monzón. He would show up almost daily to train at a dusty old gym that offered the dozens of fighters in attendance one ring, two punching bags and enough gloves for about half of them. He went pro in 1993.

Though Baldomir was training regularly, he wasn't really getting any better. Married when he was 18 and a father at 22, Baldomir had to follow in his father's footsteps—rising at dawn to sell feather dusters door-to-door. ("That was my cardio," he says.) Afternoons were spent fishing ("Sometimes if I didn't catch anything, we didn't eat"), and at night he would go to the gym, the spirit willing, the body weak and the results, predictably, abysmal. By 1998 he was a mediocre 24-8-3 and thinking about quitting.

But that September, Baldomir got a call from a promoter offering him $4,000 (about $3,000 more than his biggest purse) to fight in South Africa against Thobela. "I couldn't believe it," says Baldomir. "I couldn't figure out why they wanted me." Sensing an opportunity, though, he trained hard and in October fought his way to a draw.

Over the next six years he had 18 consecutive fights without a loss and finally, in 2005, earned a shot at Miguel Rodriguez in a WBC eliminator. Baldomir scored a unanimous decision, setting up a title fight with Zab Judah in New York City last January. Baldomir stunned Judah—and most boxing pundits—to become the WBC champion, and in July he stopped Arturo Gatti with a ninth round TKO, which set up his match with the undefeated Mayweather, now widely considered the best fighter in the world, pound-for-pound.

Financially secure for the first time in his life (he earned $1 million against Gatti and will more than double that against Mayweather), Baldomir built a five-bedroom home in Santa Fe this summer. Still, he knows when to pinch his pennies. Following a recent press conference in New York City, Baldomir and Mayweather found themselves boarding the same flight for L.A. Mayweather took his seat in first class; Baldomir, family in tow, settled into coach.

"As long as Floyd's not flying the plane," said Baldomir, "I don't care where he sits." □

SHANNON STAPLETON/REUTERS; ED MULHOLLAND/WIREIMAGE.COM (INSET)

Long Division

The welterweight division is the most competitive in boxing; these formidable fighters loom as challengers to the winner of the Mayweather-Baldomir bout.

Antonio Margarito—The WBO champ is arguably the most feared fighter in the division; the 28-year-old native of Mexico has won his last six fights by knockout.

Zab Judah—Back-to-back losses to Baldomir and Mayweather cost him credibility; losing his cool cost him his license. The Nevada boxing commission suspended Judah, 29, for a year for his role in a melee during his Mayweather bout last April.

Kermit Cintron—The newly crowned IBF champ has bounced back from a brutal 2005 loss to Margarito. One of the most physical fighters in all of boxing, Cintron, 27, has KO'd opponents in 25 of his 27 wins.

Paul Williams—The rangy (6' 1") Williams, 25, is the No. 1 challenger for the WBO title; the Punisher has won 23 of his 31 fights by KO.

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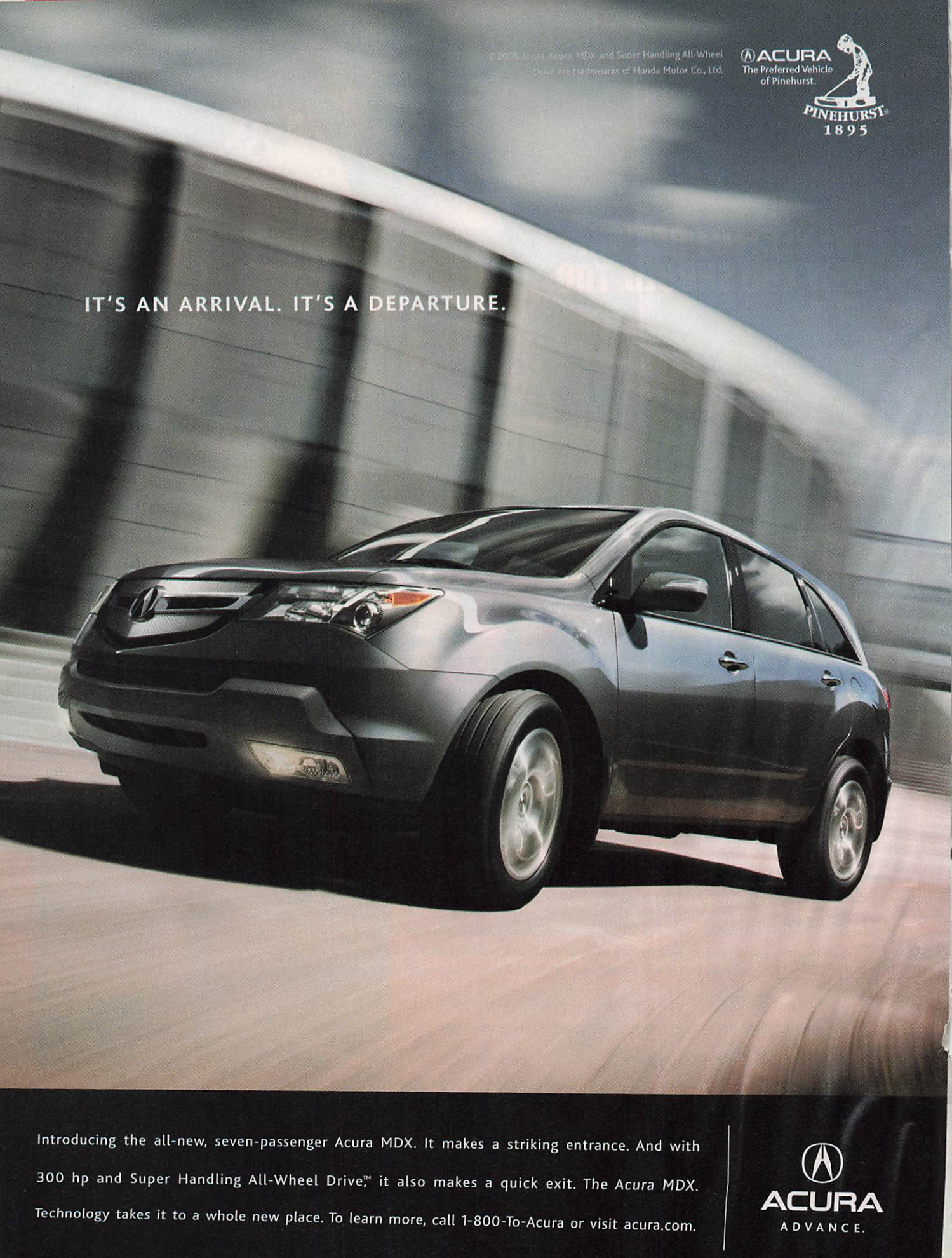

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SI Update

Whitney Taney

FACES IN THE CROWD
JAN. 24, 2005

SHORTLY AFTER she took up tennis at age nine, it became apparent that Whitney Taney was going to be quite good at it. But instead of doing what many prodigies do and head off to a tennis academy, Whitney decided she didn't want her life to be dominated by tennis. So, much to the delight of her parents and Edina (Minn.) High coach Steve Paulsen, she stayed home and played for the Hornets. She made the varsity in seventh grade; last Saturday her high school career came to an end when she beat Tooli Wilkins of Burnsville High for the

Class AA state championship. The win ran Whitney's career record to 166–0, believed to be the longest streak in high school tennis history. "I was pretty emotional out there," Whitney *(above)* said after the match, "because I've had so much fun and made so many friends playing high school tennis, and this is my last day."

Whitney, who dropped only two sets in her career, has orally committed to Michigan. Paulsen knows that her streak will eventually end, but he expects his star—who relies on brains, not brawn—to excel at the next level. "She's unbelievably consistent," says Paulsen. "She's not overpowering by any means. She has a mind-set that's very rare. She's super methodical, and you have to play the perfect point to beat her."

MARK NORLANDER (TANEY); FACES, FROM TOP: PHIL HOFFMAN; CHRIS LYNN/HENDERSONVILLE STAR NEWS; STEPHEN MAHAN; ERIC DOBBS; ROGER CAREY/DOVE STUDIOS; JOE ANGELES

Faces in the Crowd

Lizzie Barnes

NEW ORLEANS > Soccer

Barnes, a sophomore goalkeeper at Navy, has helped the team get off to a 19–0 start (the longest winning streak in the nation this season), allowing just one goal over that span. She leads NCAA Division I with an 0.06 goals-against average and a .982 save percentage, and she has 10 solo shutouts and 56 saves.

Golden Tate

HENDERSONVILLE, TENN. > Football

Golden, a senior tailback and wide receiver at Pope John Paul II High, scored seven of the Knights' first eight touchdowns and leads the team in touchdowns (27), rushing yards (1,154) and receiving yards (447). He has 84 career touchdowns and 7,607 total yards, including 2,278 yards returning kickoffs and punts.

Dimitrios Telonis

MANLIUS, N.Y. > Soccer

Dimitrios, a senior goalkeeper at Manlius Pebble Hill, saved nine shots in a 1–0 victory over Faith Heritage to earn his 75th career shutout and break the national high school record set in 1997. He has been a starter for the Trojans since the eighth grade and helped the team to a 14-1-1 record with 72 saves this season.

Shannon Taylor

MIDLOTHIAN, VA. > Field Hockey

Taylor, a junior midfielder at Richmond, had her second four-goal game of the season in a 6–1 win over St. Joseph's. She has been named Atlantic 10 field hockey performer of the week five times this season. Taylor is tied for third nationally in points per game (3.47), and leads the 13–4 Spiders with 26 goals and 59 points.

Klint Krieger

CHEYENNE, WYO. > Golf

Klint, a senior at Central High, won his second consecutive Wyoming Class 4A championship and helped the Indians win their third straight team title. Two weeks earlier he shot a one-under-par 71 to win the McDonald's Tournament of Champions at Ridgefield's Country Club in Kingsport, Tenn.

Emilie Walk

NEOGA, ILL. > Volleyball

Walk, a junior middle hitter at Washington University (St. Louis), had 19 kills and seven blocks in a 3–2 win over Missouri–St. Louis, a victory that brought the Bears to 28–1 for the season. She leads her second-ranked Division III team in kills (300) and was named University Athletic Association volleyball athlete of the week.

NOMINATE NOW ON SI.COM

To submit a candidate for Faces in the Crowd, go to **SI.com/faces.**

Sports Illustrated
SI.COM/PLAYERS
Edited by KOSTYA KENNEDY

SI Player

First Person

RAJA BELL

SUNS GUARD

On movies
I love them. I'll sit in the theater and watch two or three movies in a row. It's one of the things I am known for. I was a huge fan of *Talladega Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby*. I was quoting that movie all preseason. Especially the scene where Will Ferrell is sitting at the table praying to Baby Jesus.

On his name
My father's name is Roger, and I was born in the Virgin Islands, so with the accent Roger sounds like RA-ja. That's where it came from—technically I was named after my father. Also, in Hindi it means princely ruler or exalted one. My parents liked that.

On SI's picking the Suns to win the title
Uh oh, that's like a jinx, right? No, it's flattering, and we expect no less than to be in the Finals. We almost made it last year [but lost to Dallas in the conference finals], and that's what's driving me now—to get back and go all the way.

On being signed from the IBL to play for the NBA Finals–bound 76ers in '01
I was really, really excited. I had played in

 PHOTOGRAPH BY JASON WISE

the USBL, the CBA and [briefly] in the NBA. I was with the Sioux Falls Skyforce, and I definitely didn't expect the call at that moment—I was sitting with two teammates, about to get something to eat at Denny's. It was tough to be excited without feeling like I was rubbing it in their faces, so I had to control my emotions until I got back to my room. Two months later I was in the Finals against the Lakers, guarding Kobe and getting manhandled by Shaquille on the double team.

On clotheslining Kobe in last year's playoffs, a move that got him a one-game suspension

As I saw him start to go down the lane, it just kind of clicked that I wasn't letting him go again—not after all he was getting away with the whole game.

On fallout from the Kobe incident

I didn't think it would spiral out of control, with everyone talking about Raja this and Raja that. But it kept growing and growing until I had to turn off the TV and stop reading the papers. It was really too much for me.

On playing with MVP Steve Nash

He makes so many plays that it makes it easy for anyone offensively. And he's such a great, under-control player that I pick his brain: "If you were in this situation, what would you do" and so forth. He'll always sit down with me and others. He's a great teacher.

On meeting his wife of two years, Cindy

She played soccer at Florida International, where I went, and one of her roommates dated one of my teammates. One day they walked up to our car and she caught my eye, so I asked everyone who she was. They said she was spoken for, but I gave it a little time and we worked it out. I proposed when we were on our way to a wedding. I was giving her a corsage. I dropped it on the floor and just didn't come up. She looked down and, what do you know, I was proposing.

—As told to Elizabeth Newman

BELL, 30, AVERAGED 14.7 POINTS LAST SEASON. THE SUNS WERE TO OPEN ON TUESDAY AGAINST THE LAKERS.

WHO'S Hot

Feagles

Despite ferocious winds at Giants Stadium, Jeff Feagles—who brought his family back from Arizona to *(brrrr)* New Jersey after the Giants got him to unretire this off-season—punted one ball to the Tampa Bay five-yard line, another to the four and, in his record 295th straight game, ensured the Giants won the battle of field position, and the game.

Waynes

Reggie Wayne had a trio of touchdown grabs in the Colts win *(page 52)*, while across the pond Wayne Rooney *(right)* netted a hat trick to keep Man U ahead of rival Chelsea atop the Premier League standings.

Wild Goaltending

Minnesota's fast start (9–2) is about Manny (Fernandez) being Manny. The netminder has played every game and has been so doggedly effective (1.80 goals-against, .942 save percentage) that coach Jacques Lemaire even gave him a rare day off practice last week.

Pacman Jones

Twenty-two games into an NFL career of great expectations, the Titans' aggressive cornerback snagged his first interception, then returned a punt for a touchdown in a win on Sunday.

WHO'S Not

Eagles

Buffeted by ferocious winds in Philly—coach Andy Reid had dismissed the conditions before the game—the Eagles never got their big-play mojo going against Jacksonville and couldn't grind out yards in their third straight loss. They head into the coldest part of the schedule with no known ability to, as back Brian Westbrook *(above)* puts it, "drive the ball down their throats."

Bowdens

Clemson coach Tommy Bowden got conked on the head with a miniature bottle while his team got crushed by Virgina Tech. ("It wasn't a good night," he said.) Things are no better at Florida State for dad Bobby *(page 70)* and brother Jeff, who've lost four of six in the ACC.

Panthers Goaltenders

The tandem of Alex Auld and Ed Belfour *(right)* has been so-so on the ice (Florida's 5–6) and smashing off it: After a night out, the pair was in a hotel lobby when Belfour spilled water and Auld slipped; he got stitches in his head and missed a game.

Pacman Jones

In what may become a career of great expectorations, Jones got a misdemeanor citation for allegedly spitting on a woman in a nightclub; in August he was accused of same thing during an incident that led to charges (court date in January) of public drunkenness.

SI PLAYERS NFL POLL

Which head coach has the best defensive mind?

<< **Bill Belichick, *Patriots*** **35%**
Tony Dungy, *Colts* 15%
Lovie Smith, *Bears* 9%
Marvin Lewis, *Bengals* 8%

Which head coach has the best offensive mind?

Mike Shanahan, *Broncos* ..... **23%** >>
Mike Holmgren, *Seahawks* ... 16%
Jon Gruden, *Buccaneers* 13%
Tony Dungy, *Colts* 9%

FAST FACTS Pittsburgh's Bill Cowher was fifth in the "defensive" poll (6.7%); Philadelphia's Andy Reid was fifth in "offensive" (6.7%). . . . Belichick and Dungy both ranked in the top six of both polls. . . . Shanahan, whose Broncos have allowed an AFC-low 11.1 points per game was 11th (1.4%) in the "defensive" poll. . . . Two coaches get no votes in either poll: Oakland's Art Shell and Buffalo's Dick Jauron. . . . San Diego's Marty Schottenheimer, the NFL's active wins leader with 191, drew less than 1% of the vote for each question.

[Based on a survey of 361 NFL players] • *For an expanded version of the poll, go to SI.com/players.*

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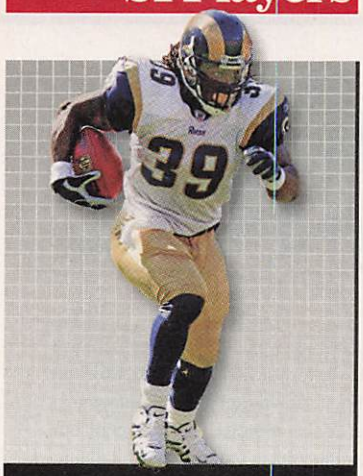

THE QUESTIONS

WITH

Steven Jackson

Rams Running Back

What was your welcome-to-the-NFL moment? Working out with Torry Holt. We did the Jugs machine and the treadmill. It was an honor that on my first day, he asked me to work out with him.

What was your most embarrassing moment? My very first carry in the NFL, I fumbled.

What is your favorite off-day activity? Reading. I'm reading *33 Strategies of War*. The most entertaining book I've read as of late is *Angels and Demons* by Dan Brown.

What's one thing about being in the NFL that people don't think about? How sore your body is after a game.

If I weren't in the NFL, I'd be . . . an understudy to an architect.

If I were NFL commissioner for a day, I'd . . . guarantee all player contracts.

LAST WEEK

Jackson, 23, ran for 84 yards and a touchdown and had three receptions for 55 yards in a 38–24 loss to the Chargers.

THIS WEEK

The Rams host the Chiefs, and Jackson, an Oregon State alum, will face a former Pac-10 rival, receiver Samie Parker (Oregon).

• NFL HOMETOWN

A Good, Slow Life

The Giants' Luke Petitgout has farmland roots

GEORGETOWN, DEL.

ESTABLISHED: 1791
POP.: 4,643
AREA: 4.1 square miles
COUNTY NICKNAME: Delaware's Dixie

THE VIBE "When you're from Georgetown, you're from Sussex County—it's called Slower Lower Delaware," says Petitgout. "There was a lot of farmland, and everyone knew each other. One high school. No movie theater."

THE HOMESTEAD "I lived on an 80-acre farm: corn, soybeans, pet chickens, couple of pet ducks, couple of dogs," says Petitgout, a 30-year-old tackle. "My mom and dad still live there. My grandparents live on one side of my driveway, my other grandparents live a mile down the road."

SWEET SEASONS "In the spring you'd do the fields, in the fall you'd be harvesting," recalls the Notre Dame alum. "Our driveway was 300 yards. You'd go down to get the bus and see the green corn as it was changing. Behind us was maybe 400 acres of woods."

LOCAL EATERY Georgetown Family Restaurant, formerly Smith's: "It's not fancy—it's comparable to a diner, but it's not a diner," says Petitgout of the patty-melt, cream-of-tomato-soup-serving establishment. "This is for real, real locals, true Sussex County-ians."

DON'T MISS "In early November they have the Punkin' Chunkin' Contest [this Friday through Sunday]," says Petitgout. "People build contraptions to launch pumpkins. There's different classes of machines and catapults. The big dogs are these steam cannons, and they shoot these things close to a mile."

GUYS, DON'T MISS THIS EITHER "The Oyster Eat in February is at the fire hall, Station 77. All the oysters, beer and hard-boiled eggs you can eat," says the 6' 6", 308-pound Petitgout, who has been given an honorary fire hat *(above)*. "There's sawdust on the floor, they bring in a bluegrass band. No women allowed. I go every year."

The Pop Culture Grid

How do sports stars fit in?	Best thing you've ever gotten for free	Number of cars in your driveway?	A pet you're dying to own?	I'm secretly afraid of . . .	Scale of 1 to 10: How much do you want Madonna to adopt you?	My ulimate red carpet dream date would be . . .
ERIC BARTON *Jets LB*	Nothing	Three	A big *Turner and Hooch* dog—a bull mastiff	Marshmallow Peeps	I'd like to be adopted as her boyfriend	Eva Mendes *(below)*
AL HARRINGTON *Pacers F*	A Cartier watch	Seven	A monkey and a cheetah	Mice	10	Eva Mendes
RYAN SHANNON *Ducks RW*	A Wayne Gretzky hockey stick	Zero	A liger	Not being able to play hockey anymore	Zero	Rachel McAdams
BRENT BARRY *Spurs G*	An iPod	Three	Miss July 2005	Big waves	One	Elle Macpherson

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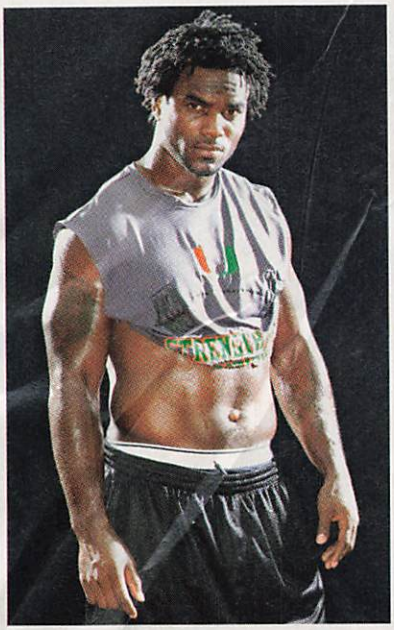


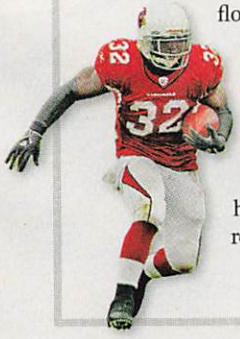
● NFL WORKOUT

Fast and Furious

In seven hell-bent minutes a day Edgerrin James steels his abs for a season's pounding

FOR THE last five off-seasons, star running back Edgerrin James, as well as dozens of other Miami alums now in the NFL, has adhered to a core-centric workout designed by Andreu Swasey, the Hurricanes' strength coach. James's five-day-a-week regimen starts the day after his season ends and continues until the day before the next season begins. James, 28, may miss an occasional weight room session, but he's faithful to the most intense part of the workout: a 17-exercise, 250-rep abdominal sequence that must be done within seven minutes and requires little more than a floor, a table and a lot of determination. James, who has struggled in his first year as a Cardinal, credits the routine with helping him make four Pro Bowls as a Colt. Here's a sampling of his abs routine. For the full regimen go to SI.com/players.

—Jeffri Chadiha

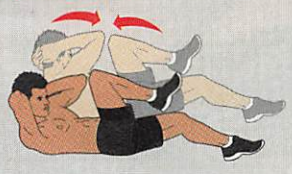


HYPEREXTENSIONS (10 REPS)

Lie face down on a bench with a weight (or a partner) stabilizing your ankles and your torso draped over an end of the bench so that your head is near the floor. With hands on sides of head **slowly raise torso** to horizontal position. Slowly lower torso back down. Keep neck, shoulders and upper back arched throughout movement.

TWISTED SIT-UPS (16 REPS)

Lie face up, fingers interlocked behind the head. Bring knees slightly and lift shoulder blades. Straighten left leg to 45 degrees while bringing left elbow toward right knee; switch sides, bringing right elbow toward left knee. **Alternate in a pedaling motion** as if riding a bicycle.

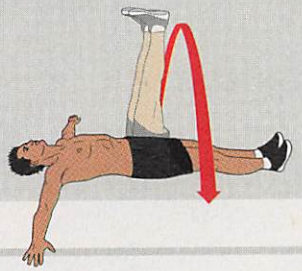


LEG HUGS (10 REPS)

Lie face up, arms and legs extended. Slowly raise upper back while bringing knees toward head; grab knees and clutch them, **pulling the body into a ball**. Hold the position a few seconds. Release knees and slowly return to starting position.

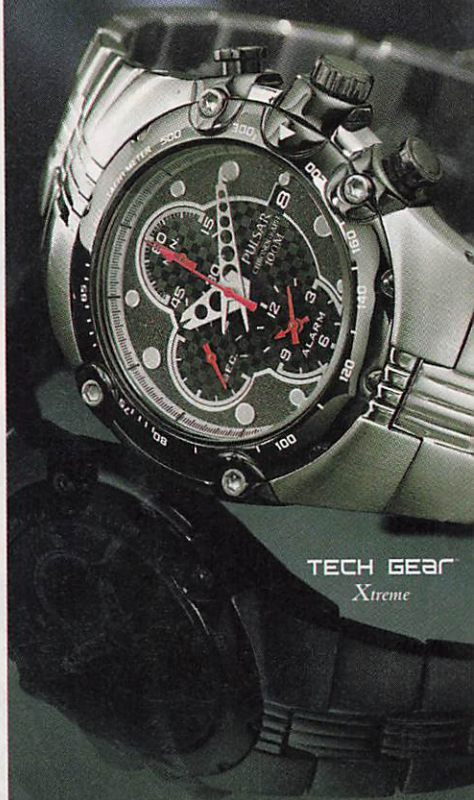
REVERSE TRUNK TWISTS (20 REPS)

Lie face up, legs extended, arms straight out at sides. Raise legs perpendicular to floor. **Slowly lower feet** to the right (legs straight, muscles tight) until feet are a few inches above floor. Return to starting position, repeat to left side.



BRIAN SMITH/CORBIS-OUTLINE; JOHN W. MCDONOUGH (ACTION); ILLUSTRATIONS BY KAGAN MCLEOD

PUT A CHRONOGRAPH ON YOUR ARM AND MONEY IN YOUR POCKET.



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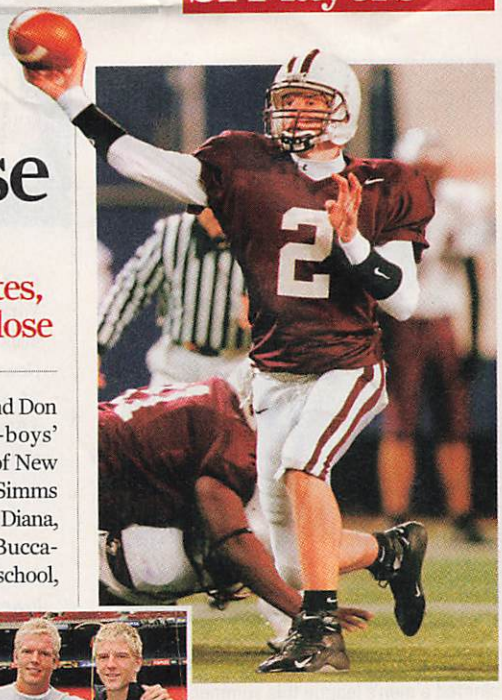
Private Enterprise

When private high schools court top athletes, public schools usually lose



FOUR YEARS AFTER choosing to attend Don Bosco Prep (Ramsey, N.J.), an all-boys' Catholic high school in the suburbs of New York City, Matt Simms has no regrets. Simms had been expected to follow his mother, Diana, and brother, Chris, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers' quarterback, to the local public school, Ramapo High (Franklin Lakes, N.J.), but the Louisville-bound senior wanted the bright lights of a big-time football program. "I've played against great teams on a regular basis," says Matt.

NO REGRETS Matt Simms (above and with Chris, left) says Bosco was "right for me."

But Simms's choice of schools is part of a trend that is worrying some public educators. He's one of dozens of elite players—including Jimmy Clausen, the Oaks Christian (Westlake Village, Calif.) QB headed to Notre Dame—who have been lured to private schools by scholarships, TV exposure and first-rate facilities, and who then spend their high school careers beating up on inferior public school teams. In three years as a starter, Simms, 17, has gone 28–3, losing only to Catholic schools; he is 14–0 against public schools. This year Don Bosco has played four public schools and won by a combined 165–7.

Bosco is within a 10-mile radius of two other all-boys' Catholic schools, Bergen Catholic (Oradell, N.J.) and St. Joseph's Regional (Montvale, N.J.). Head-to-head against New Jersey's public schools, the three Catholic schools are a combined 7–2. With no restrictions on where they can pull their players from and plenty of money to work with, private schools have a huge recruiting advantage over public schools, which have relatively small budgets and only one district from which to draw talent.

Public school coaches are now pushing for change. On Oct. 20 the Kentucky High School Athletic Association's board of control passed a measure saying athletes who switch from a public to a private high school risk losing a year of eligibility. The measure—to be reviewed by the state board of education this winter—comes after the KHSAA voted last year to create separate playoffs for public and private schools but was rebuffed by the state, which asked for an alternative plan.

California and Illinois are weighing similar measures, and New Jersey, which separates public and private schools in the playoffs, may mandate separate regular-season schedules—all in the name of competitive balance. Strict rules may be necessary to create parity. Teaneck High coach Dennis Heck understands why top players often don't consider going to public schools like his. "You're a good player in town," he says. "Do you go to Bosco and play on TV—or to Bergen to play in Giants Stadium?" *—reported by Kevin Armstrong*

FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS

HAMILTON *(Chandler, Ariz.)* AT CHANDLER

AFTER THE Arizona–Arizona State game, on Nov. 25, the annual matchup of the Hamilton High Huskies and the Chandler High Wolves is the state's biggest game of the year (Nov. 3, ESPNU, 8 p.m.) and the biggest thing in town besides the Ostrich Festival. More than 10,000 fans are expected at Austin Field for the eighth edition of the rivalry. The 9–0 Wolves, off to their best start ever, have never beaten the Huskies, who are led by senior tailback Covaughn DeBoskie.

ARISTIDE ECONOMOPOULOS/THE STAR LEDGER (SIMMS); MATT MAY/TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS (SIMMS AND BROTHER); TIM HACKER/EAST VALLEY TRIBUNE (WOLVES)

TOYOTA PRESENTS
JON & J.J.
THE LINE OF
SCRIMMAGE

JON, J.J. AND THEIR TOYOTA TACOMA MAKE THEIR WAY TO VALDOSTA, GEORGIA, FOR THE BIG GAME BETWEEN THE WILDCATS AND THE DEMONS.

VALDOSTA VS WARNER ROBINS

Jon and J.J. are in Valdosta, Georgia, to get the lowdown on the winningest program in the nation. For starters, they'll investigate the east end zone. Anyone who knows anything about Valdosta knows the end zone is haunted. That might frighten opponents from scoring, but it won't stop Jon and J.J. from camping out there for the night. One thing they did find was the Valdosta mascot, Wally the Wildcat. He'll help Jon and J.J. bring you the play of the game. Their football enthusiasm will really be pumping when they experience one of the school's longest-running traditions. Right before kickoff, players bang their helmets on the tin-roof tunnel leading onto the field. It's a sound that awes any opponent. Tune in to the Sunday Night Football Toyota Halftime Show on NBC and check out Jon and J.J.: The Line of Scrimmage.

WHERE TO NEXT?

Cincinnati, Ohio
Elder vs Benedictine

TOYOTA

toyota.com

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The Boy From Brazil

A New England soccer phenom contemplates a move home and a pro career

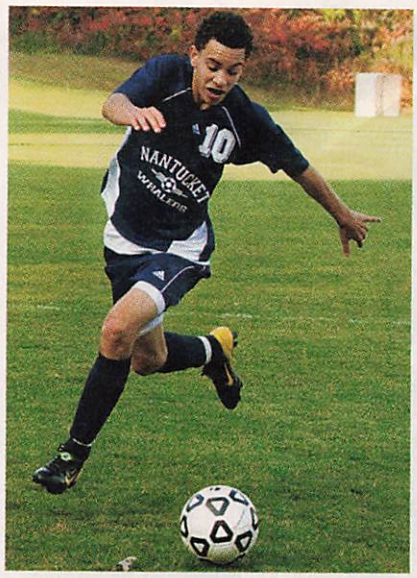
SOMETIMES IT'S hard to tell if Caio Correa is more obsessed with technology or soccer. The Nantucket (Mass.) High sophomore midfielder spends eight to 10 hours each week analyzing European matches and highlight clips of world-class players like Ronaldinho and Cristiano Ronaldo, which he downloads from YouTube.com and metacafe.com. Then, he says, "I film myself practicing their moves with the webcam on my laptop in the basement."

But Correa is no nerdy wannabe. His footwork and speed have made the him the most feared high school player in Massachusetts; he's the state's top scorer with 32 goals and 23 assists. Yet what really sets Correa apart, says Nantucket coach Rich Brannigan, is the lanky Brazilian's maturity and playmaking. "He gets the team involved and makes everybody around him better."

NANTUCKET HIGH
Nantucket, Mass.

Last summer Correa, who is 5' 10" and 140 pounds, played in Nantucket's adult league against mostly foreign-born men who work as cooks and landscapers on the island. Though the league is highly competitive, Correa led it in scoring (29 goals) and was voted player of the year. Brannigan has fielded inquiries about Correa from Division I schools including Notre Dame and St. John's.

Correa developed his ball-handling skills in Rio de Janeiro, where he lived until his family moved to Nantucket when he was 10. His first coach was his father, Luis, who played eight years of pro soccer in Brazil against stars like national team midfielder Zico. "When I was six, my dad would take me to the beach to play *futevólei*," says Correa, who describes the homegrown sport as a hybrid of soccer and beach volleyball.



AHEAD OF HIS TIME The 16-year-old Correa dominated a men's league this summer.

The Correas have worked hard to carve out a comfortable life for their two sons in Nantucket. Luis co-owns a house painting company, and Nelma, Caio's mom, cleans houses. But Nantucket High stands to lose its playmaker at season's end. Luis is taking Caio back to Brazil in December to try out with the 18-to-20-year-old developmental squad of Voltaco, a Division I state team that's a feeder squad for Brazil's elite pro teams. "If I do well there, one of the top teams could sign me for millions," he says. "That's my dream. To follow in my dad's footsteps." —*Luis Fernando Llosa*

Brawl Fallout

DAMIEN BERRY, a star running back and safety at Glades Central High (Belle Glade, Fla.), was watching the Florida-Auburn game on Oct. 14 when the broadcast was interrupted by scenes of the now infamous brawl between Miami and Florida International *(right)*. As Berry, who is orally committed to UM, watched the chaos unfold, five schools sent him text messages. "They were like, 'Don't you want to be at a more stable school?' " says Berry.

Berry still intends to go to Miami, and so far no recruits have said publicly they are no longer considering the school because of the brawl, but some have expressed concerns. Adewale Ojomo, a defensive end at Hialeah Miami Lakes who has yet to commit and was at the Miami-FIU game as part of "Salute to Florida High School Football" night, is still considering Miami, one of six schools recruiting him. "A lot of stuff they did in the brawl wasn't acceptable," Ojomo says, "but it's not going to kill the University of Miami." —*Andrew Lawrence*

THE LIST

COACHES SENT HOME

York High (Elmhurst, Ill.) cross-country coach Joe Newton *(right)*, who has won 25 state championships in a 51-year career, and his assistant, Charlie Kern, were suspended last Friday for the rest of the season by the school because they ran a summer camp that exceeded by 10 days the state limit of 25 days that coaches are allowed to work with their runners in the offseason. Ranked No. 1 in the state, the Dukes were coached in the sectionals on Saturday by track coach Stan Reddel, advancing to the state meet this weekend.

FIGHTING WORDS

Eric Gordon, 17, a senior guard at North Central High (Indianapolis), told *The Indianapolis Star* last week that he had received threatening messages on his MySpace.com page from Fighting Illini fans after he switched his oral commitment from Illinois to Indiana.

HE'LL TAKE MANHATTAN

Bill Walker, 18, a 6′ 6″ point guard who teamed with O.J. Mayo for two state championships at North College Hill High (Cincinnati), has been admitted to Kansas State and could play for the Wildcats by December. Walker *(with ball)*, his high school eligibility used up, recently took the ACT and earned a final English credit from North College, allowing him to graduate.

NORTHWEST EXPRESS

Already the national leader in touchdowns and passing yards, Prosser (Wash.) High senior QB Kellen Moore completed 23 of 27 passes for 385 yards and eight TDs during a 76–8 rout of Wapato on Friday.

Daily Coverage

For more high school news and rankings from *RISE* and Dave Krider's Primetime Performer of the Week, go to **SI.com/highschool**.

JIM POWERS/THE INQUIRER AND MIRROR (CORREA); JULIE ASTROWSKI/LIBERTY SUBURBAN CHICAGO NEWSPAPERS (NEWTON); BILL FRAKES (WALKER); JASON ARNOLD/ICON SMI (MIAMI-FIU BRAWL)

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OUT AND OVER Molina, the surprise postseason hits leader, was the first to celebrate when Inge whiffed to end the Series.

Sports Illustrated

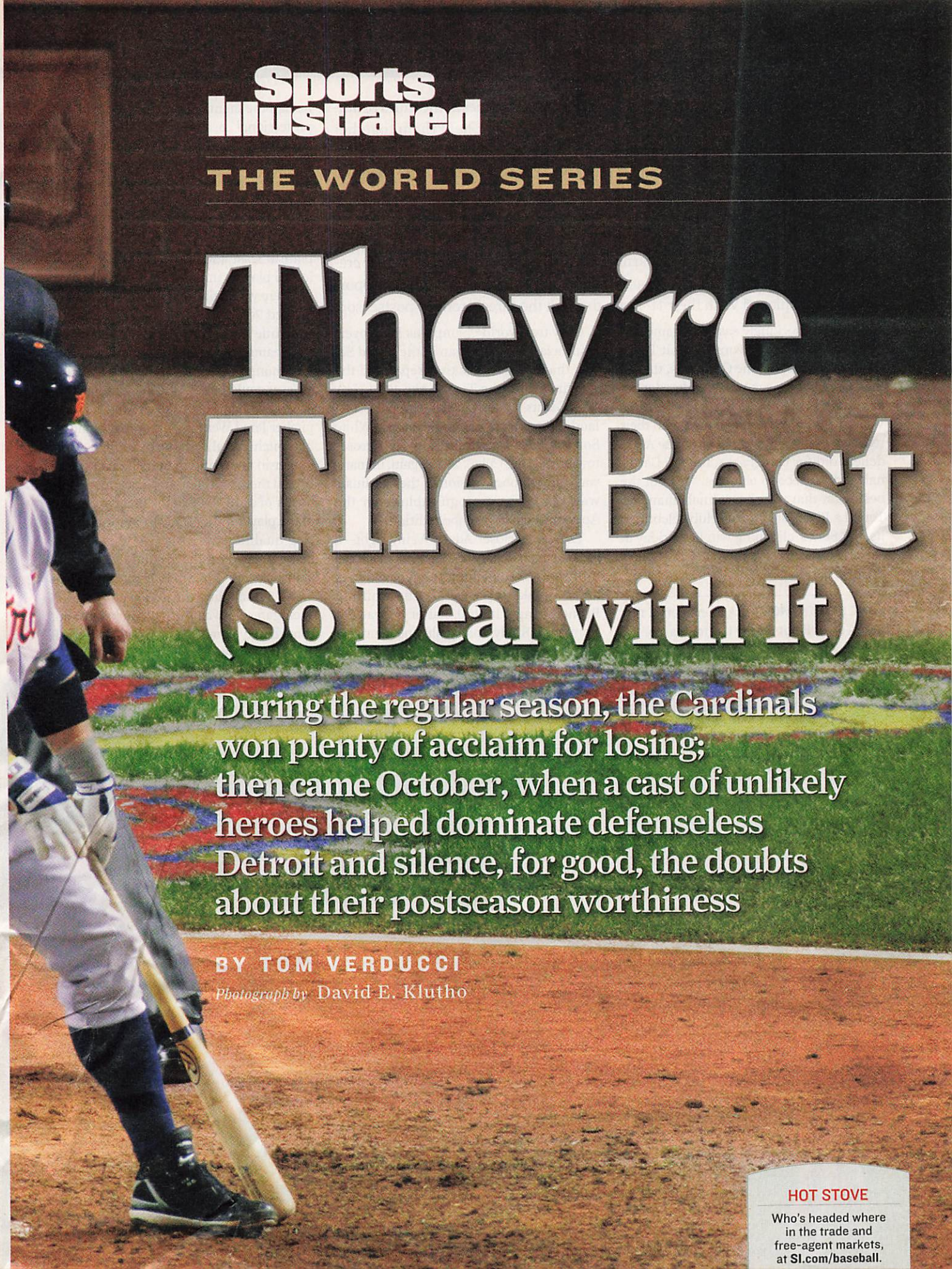
THE WORLD SERIES

They're The Best (So Deal with It)

During the regular season, the Cardinals won plenty of acclaim for losing; then came October, when a cast of unlikely heroes helped dominate defenseless Detroit and silence, for good, the doubts about their postseason worthiness

BY TOM VERDUCCI

Photograph by David E. Klutho



HOT STOVE

Who's headed where in the trade and free-agent markets, at SI.com/baseball.

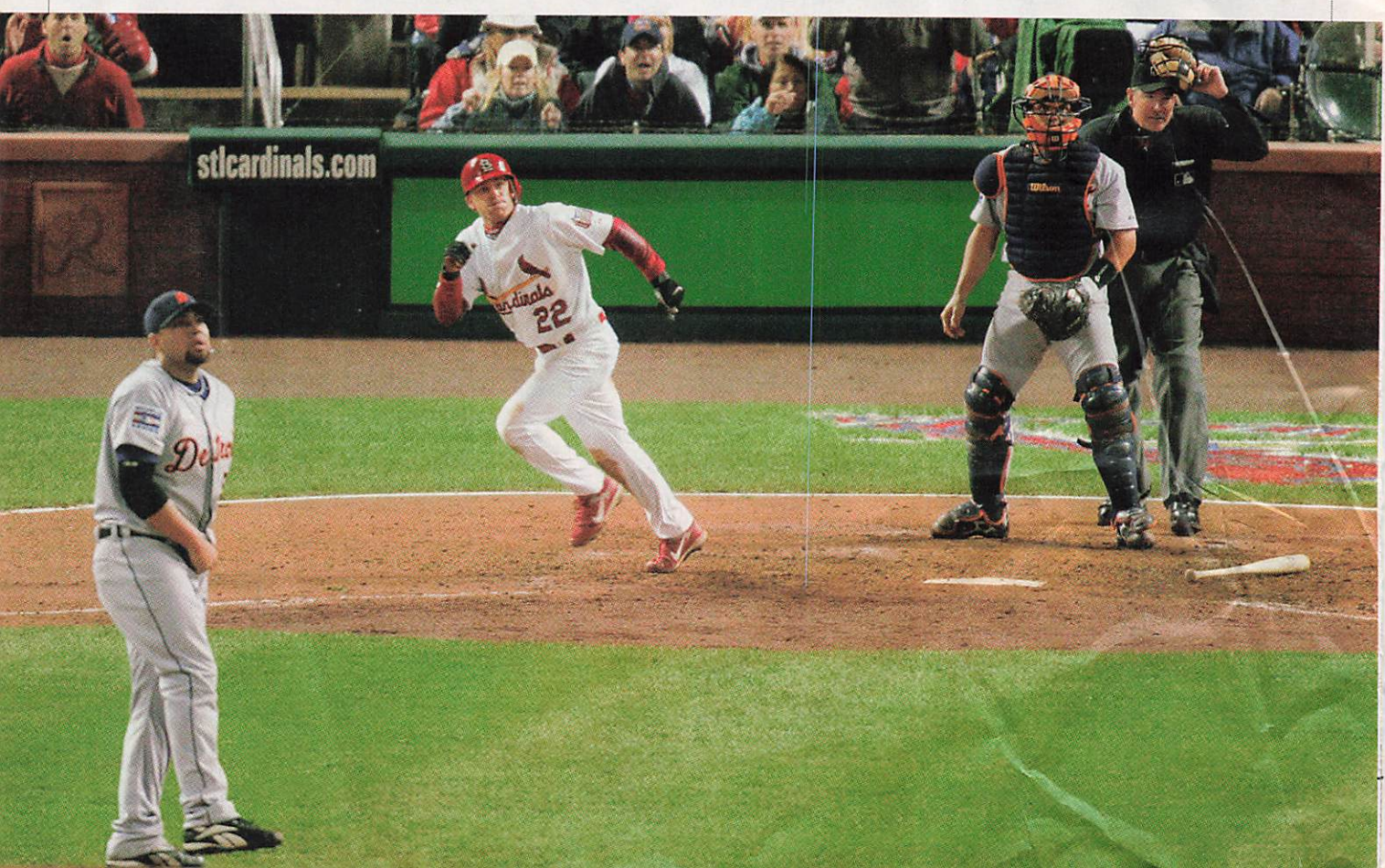
BENEATH THE tequila and the tears, beneath the miles of athletic tape and the vials of cortisone that held them together through their near death of a September, the 2006 St. Louis Cardinals left us with an indelible lesson about October baseball. To call the Cardinals the worst world champion in history—their .516 regular-season winning percentage was lower than that of all 101 previous world champions, not to mention that of a dozen teams this year—is the killjoy's translation of their earned place. In the future every modestly credentialed postseason team will regard them as something else: the most opportunistic champion. ¶ With their 11–5 run through the three-pronged postseason, including a shockingly easy five-game dismissal of the heavily favored Detroit Tigers in the World Series, the Cardinals, they of the 83 regular-season wins, rendered moot any arguments about their worthiness. What the 2004 Boston Red Sox, with their recovery from a three-games-to-none ALCS deficit, did for comebacks, the '06 Cardinals did for second chances. "It's not the best team that wins," Cardinals manager Tony La Russa said as his club celebrated its 4–2 Series-clinching win last Friday at Busch Stadium. "It's the team that plays the best baseball."

Only two world champions have overcome a larger victory gap in the World Series than the 12 wins that separated the Cardinals and the Tigers: the 1954 New York Giants (14 fewer wins than the Cleveland Indians) and the 1906 Chicago White Sox (23 fewer victories than their crosstown rivals, the Cubs). Then again, in many ways the October version of the Cardinals was virtually unrecognizable from the April-through-September edition.

There was closer Adam Wainwright—a rookie who had only one save in his life before Sept. 27—finishing the World Series and a breakout postseason by whiffing Brandon Inge. In 2003, after he was cut from the U.S. Olympic qualifying team, the 25-year-old righty had wondered whether he had the mental toughness to make it in professional baseball; in October he struck out 15 batters in 9⅔ scoreless innings. There to embrace Wainwright after the final out was catcher Yadier Molina, whose .216 average during the regular season was higher than only Tampa Bay's Jonny Gomes among the 200 batters who came to the plate at least 450 times. Naturally Molina led all players in postseason hits (19).

There was righthander Jeff Weaver, who ranked 76th out of 80 qualifiers for the ERA title (5.76) and had bounced among five teams with a losing record (86–101) and hangdog indifference. On Friday, Weaver could be seen weeping in the arms of his brother, Los Angeles Angels rookie pitcher Jered Weaver. Earlier that night Jeff had pitched eight masterly innings, going longer in an outing than he had all year.

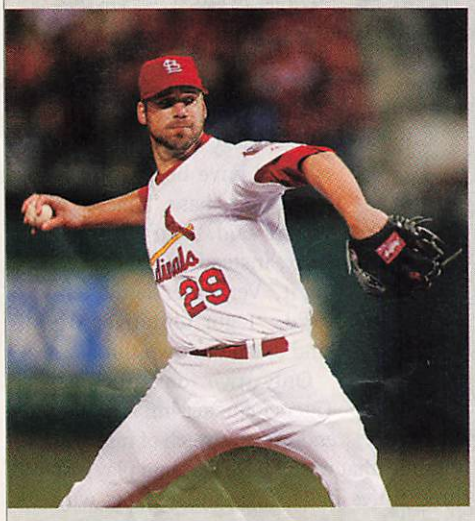
And there was shortstop David Eckstein, owner of a .487 OPS in the first two rounds of the playoffs and dead last among all batting qualifiers in RBIs (23) this season, being hoisted off the ground by La Russa after Eckstein drove in four runs in Games 4 and 5, including the go-ahead scores in each game. It was the 5' 7" Eckstein, not some hunky home run hitter, who drove off with the yellow muscle car for being named



LONG STORY SHORT Eckstein opened the Series 0 for 11 but closed it 8 for his last 11, including the decisive Game 4 hit off Zumaya.

For Starters, as Easy as 1-2-3

Key stat: The front of the Cards' rotation devoured a startling 62% of the team's postseason innings



1 CHRIS CARPENTER
Reversed momentum of Series with dominant victory in Game 3

2 JEFF SUPPAN
Held opponents to three runs or fewer in all four playoff starts

3 JEFF WEAVER
Didn't go eight innings in a game in '06—until the clincher

the Fall Classic's Most Valuable Player. And so, too, it was the churchgoing, teetotaling Eckstein gleefully getting a shot of tequila poured down his throat in the clubhouse by teammate Scott Spiezio. Eckstein last had so imbibed in 2002, when he and Spiezio won a world championship with the Angels. "Right now," Eckstein said in the jubilant clubhouse, "I don't feel a thing."

For this October, that was a first. After a near catastrophic September, when the Cardinals nearly coughed up a seven-game lead with 12 to play, the team's sense of purpose in October was manifest in their undersized shortstop. Indeed, Tigers lefthander Kenny Rogers might well have been describing Eckstein in the words he employed when he tried to explain away that suspicious smudge on his pitching hand in Game 2: *dirt*, *sweat*, *spit* and *rosin*.

Eckstein missed most of St. Louis's 12–17 September because of a strained left oblique muscle, a strained left hamstring and a strained left shoulder. By Game 6 of the NLCS against the Mets, trainer Barry Weinberg suggested to Eckstein that he was too banged up to help the team. "You won't be able to live with yourself if you go out there and aren't ready to play," Weinberg said.

"Barry," Eckstein replied, "I won't be able to live with myself if I don't play in this game. I'm playing."

Eckstein didn't miss a postseason inning, though every game necessitated a five-hour pregame routine that mimicked a scarecrow getting stuffed back together. Eckstein took 20 minutes of ultrasound treatment on his shoulder, 10 minutes of heat-pack treatments, 10 minutes of acupuncture, occasional cortisone shots and special taping of his shoulder, rib cage and hamstring, in addition to the usual stretching exercises, video study and batting and fielding practice.

"He was significantly weak in his shoulder," says St. Louis assistant trainer Greg Hauck, "and there's no way a guy could go out there and play [like that]. And he was like, 'It's the World Series.' "

Eckstein began the Series 0 for 11 but reached base in his final three appearances in Game 3, a 5–0 Cardinals win headlined by the masterpiece of ace righthander Chris Carpenter. Eckstein began Game 4 with the kind of at bat that separated the Cardinals from the undisciplined Tigers. Even though he fell behind righthander Jeremy Bonderman 0 and 2, Eckstein wound up seeing nine pitches, fouling off four and beating out an infield hit on a half swing on the last one.

The Cards' tenacity was abetted by Detroit's comical play.

That battle with Bonderman presaged the most pivotal at bat of the Series, which occurred a couple of hours later: a duel between Eckstein and Tigers righty reliever Joel Zumaya with two outs and a runner on second in the eighth inning of a 4–4 game. Should you ever lose your faith in baseball, roll the footage of Eckstein's at bat, which reaffirmed the beautiful democracy of the sport. Wrapped beneath his uniform as if he came straight from triage, Eckstein stepped in against the 6' 3" Zumaya, who wears a flame tattoo on his left arm and a menacing goatee on his chin, sports a bloodshot right eye (from chronic allergies) and throws a baseball harder than any man alive. You half expect him to ride a Harley out of the bullpen to the mound. It was a mismatch.

Eckstein took four straight pitches from Zumaya to run the count to 3 and 1 before turning around a 100-mph heater. The line

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: DAVID E. KLUTHO; AL TIELEMANS; JOHN BIEVER; JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

AMY SANGETTI/AP

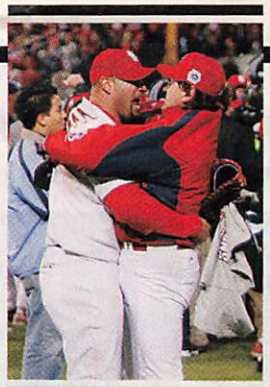
drive flicked off the glove of diving left-fielder Craig Monroe as teasingly as a goodbye kiss and fell for the game-deciding double. "David Eckstein was a role model for me when he won the World Series in 2002, and he's still a role model," says backup infielder Aaron Miles, who scored on the hit. "He talks about persevering and says over and over how baseball doesn't owe you anything. If anything, you owe baseball. I model my game after him."

The second-chance Cardinals patiently wended their way through October, with the built-in off days of the postseason mitigating the lack of rotation depth that plagued them in the regular season. Their top three starters, Carpenter, righthander Jeff Suppan and Weaver, started all but two of St. Louis's 16 postseason games and covered 62% of the innings, up from 35% in the regular season.

Though it began all three series on the road, St. Louis outpitched the two top pitching staffs in baseball, those of the San Diego Padres and the Tigers, and won the NLCS by twice beating the Mets' deep bullpen in New York (including Game 7). "What this tells you," says Detroit first baseman Sean Casey, "is that you've got to get in the playoffs. That's all you need to do: Get in. And then you've got a shot like anybody else. Look at them. They're world champions."

The Cardinals' tenacity was abetted by Detroit's abysmal, near-comical play. The eight unearned runs allowed by the Tigers were the most in the World Series in half a century. Third baseman Inge committed three errors, and centerfielder Curtis Granderson, giving new meaning to Fall Classic, flopped on the wet turf while chasing a routine fly ball by Eckstein in Game 4.

The lingering image of the Tigers, though, will be that of their pitchers throwing to bases as if blindfolded. Every playoff team is armed with massive amounts of scouting information on opponents, compiled in thick binders and DVDs and reviewed on a daily basis in pregame meetings with scouts and coaches. Who knew, though, that the Cardinals' shrewdest game plan for defeating the Tigers was scrawled on a homemade sign held by a fan at Busch Stadium during Game 5. It read HIT IT TO THE PITCHER.



"How do you explain us being here?" asked La Russa.

Detroit pitchers fielded 14 chances and erred a record five times. Tigers righthander Justin Verlander provided the perfect coda to an imperfect series when, with Detroit leading 2–1 in the fourth inning of Game 5, he threw away a bunt on what should have been an easy out at third base. "I picked it up and said, 'Don't throw it away,' instead of just throwing it," Verlander said afterward. "I got tentative. We kind of cut our own throats."

Only two days before, Tigers manager Jim Leyland, enduring a stretch of rain and inactivity that would have his team play just three times in 11 days, burned his way through a carton of cigarettes. "Worst day for my lungs," he said before adding, in what had to be a rare admission at a World Series: "We're bored, to be honest with you."

If Detroit lost its edge, the Cardinals, and especially La Russa, gained perspective. The Cardinals' manager had taken three 100-win powerhouses to the World Series and lost 12 of 13 games to inferior teams. (The 1988 Los Angeles Dodgers and 1990 Cincinnati Reds beat his Oakland A's teams; the 2004 Red Sox swept his Cardinals.) This was the meekest of the 12 teams he piloted into October, and yet it joined his stacked '89 A's as the only ones to win a title.

"How do you explain us being here?" he asked before Game 4 was postponed. "If you go back and examine the last five, 10, 15 years of the playoffs, there's a lot of weird stuff that happens. A lot of it comes down to which way the game goes when you get to a couple of pivotal moments. That's one of October's charms. The more you go through it, the more you realize how fragile things are."

The World Series has crowned seven different champions in seven years, a run of parity unmatched even by the Super Bowl–era NFL, supposedly sports' gold stan-

SAY "CHAMPS!" After clearing the clubhouse of outsiders, the Cardinals soaked in the moment with a team photo.

AL TIELEMANS (TOP); SCOTT ROVAK/ST. LOUIS CARDINALS

dard of balance. Selig said before the World Series that he will give some thought to placing obstacles in front of wild-card teams in the postseason, such as taking away a first-round home game, but the commissioner has come to enjoy the playoffs' signature unpredictability. Who's to say that teams such as the Mariners, Phillies, Reds or Blue Jays—all of whom finished within five wins of the Cardinals and have never reached any of the 12 World Series in the wild-card era—can't have their turn at the table next year?

"It's a tribute to the guts of this team," La Russa, in his office after Game 5, said of his club's unexpected run. Behind him sat an open suitcase, one he had packed in case St. Louis had to return to Detroit for Game 6. Among his traveling items was a book, *Act of Treason*, a title that might have described how an 83-win world champion might have been received in another era.

The lesson of the Cardinals actually is not so new. As Thoreau wrote in the pre-wild-card era of 1854, "I learned . . . that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours."

Is there a success sweeter than the unexpected kind? Not if you saw how the most famous 83-win team in history celebrated or how their faithful filled the streets of a grand old baseball town into the early-morning hours of last Saturday. There was a point at which centerfielder Jim Edmonds, the longest-tenured Cardinal, cleared the clubhouse of reporters, cameras and even family members. "Now we're going to have our fun!" he said.

The Cardinals, soaked through their clothes, hats askew, leaning upon one another, half drunk and half silly, gathered around the world championship trophy for the sloppiest and greatest team picture any of them will ever know. Suddenly one of them realized that somebody was missing and dispatched a clubhouse attendant to fetch him from the field. Eckstein had been shaking hands with fans. Alerted, he ran through the dugout, up the runway steps, past the indoor batting tunnel, past the video room and through the double doors of the clubhouse to join the scrum.

Upon seeing him burst into the room his teammates cheered, "MVP! MVP!"

And with his arrival the Cards were complete. The photographer snapped the shutter, preserving this moment, this team. □

BARRY TAYLOR/WIREIMAGE.COM (ZITO); JOHN W. MCDONOUGH (SORIANO); DILIP VISHWANAT/GETTY IMAGES (SUPPAN); DOUG BENC/GETTY IMAGES (HUFF); DARREN CARROLL (LEE); RICH PILLING/MLB PHOTOS/GETTY IMAGES (WILLIAMSON)

Fire Up the Hot Stove

With the fistfuls of cash that are likely to be thrown at free agents this winter, here are some potential money pits—and bargains

BUYER BEWARE

BARRY ZITO, LHP, **A's** The soon-to-be-ex-Oakland ace has made at least 34 starts in each of his six full big league seasons, but he has become reluctant to throw anything but his curveball for strikes, a fact that was blatantly obvious during his disastrous start against the Tigers in the ALCS. Zito had the second-highest walk total in the AL last season (99), and his strikeout-to-walk ratio, which was over 2.0 as recently as 2004, declined to a pedestrian 1.4 after the 2006 All-Star break, which suggests that his ERA is likely to rise into the mid-4s without a change in approach.

ALFONSO SORIANO, LF, **Nationals** Hitting 46 homers while playing half his games in RFK Stadium, as Soriano did in '06, was a remarkable accomplishment. And his defense and plate discipline, long his greatest faults, were vastly improved—he had 67 walks, almost doubling his career high. Still, the bidding for Soriano, who'll be 31 in January, could run as high as $17 million to $20 million per season, and he doesn't have the track record to justify that kind of expenditure. And Baseball Prospectus's research indicates that the contract year phenomenon is very real. (Adrian Beltre, anyone?)

JEFF SUPPAN, RHP, **Cardinals** Even with his fine postseason performance, when his ERA was 2.49, Suppan amassed just 13 strikeouts against 11 walks in 25⅓ innings, continuing a pattern he exhibited during the regular season. His QERA, a measure designed by BP to predict a pitcher's performance on the basis of his walk rate, strikeout rate and ground ball–to–fly ball ratio, was 4.75—more than half a run higher than his ERA. Take Suppan away from the Cardinals' fine defense and you have a No. 4 starter, not a No. 2.

BUYERS BE AWARE

AUBREY HUFF, 3B, **Astros** Detractors will point to Huff's disappointing performance after he was obtained from the Devil Rays in July. Huff hit .250 with Houston, including just .213 at supposedly hitter-friendly Minute Maid Park. The catch is that while Houston is an excellent home field for righthanded hitters, it's one of the toughest environments in the league for lefties like Huff, reducing their overall offensive production by 14%. Huff will never be a star, but his batting average should return to the .290 range, with plenty of power to support it.

CARLOS LEE, LF, **Rangers** It's not as if Lee will be had at Filene's Basement prices, but he's by far a better-rounded offensive performer than he's given credit for. In '06 Lee hit 37 homers and struck out just 65 times; the only major leaguer who had more home runs and fewer strikeouts was Albert Pujols. Lee also stole 19 bases in 21 attempts; among major leaguers with at least 30 home runs, only Soriano swiped more bags (41). Players with well-rounded skill sets are good bets to age well (Andre Dawson and Dave Winfield, for example), and Lee, 30, could provide production comparable to that of Soriano at 70% of his price.

SCOTT WILLIAMSON, RHP, **Padres** His ERA over the past two years is 5.70, but Williamson—who had Tommy John surgery on his right elbow after the '04 season—has struck out more than a batter per inning during that period. Bargain hunters should remember that it can take pitchers as long as 24 months to fully recover from a Tommy John operation. So while Williamson would certainly be a high-risk signing, the rewards for getting a pitcher who has closer-worthy stuff at a contract that should be barely above the league minimum could be considerable, too. —*Nate Silver, Baseball Prospectus*

1917–2006

Red Auerbach

BY FRANK DEFORD

RED AUERBACH, who suffered a fatal heart attack last Saturday at the age of 89, was not only as successful a coach and general manager as there ever has been in professional sports but was also, in his promotion of the black athlete, influential far beyond the basketball court. Then, too, with his bluster and bravado, he was to opponents the most detestable coach since John McGraw managed the New York Giants a half century before. Arrogantly brandishing his victory cigar when a Celtics triumph was assured, Auerbach was, in effect, the progenitor of all the showboating and taunting that have distinguished sports in the modern era. ¶ Auerbach won a

1953 Three years into his Celtics reign.

1958 Berating Mendy Rudolph.

1961 Sitting out a game in New York while under suspension.

1963 Sending off Cousy after 13 seasons together.

1964 After Russell's 10,000th point.

RICH CLARKSON (RIGHT); FROM LEFT: AP; JACK O'CONNELL/BOSTON GLOBE; BETTMANN/CORBIS (2); FRED KAPLAN

record nine NBA championships with Boston (a mark since equaled by Phil Jackson) before he retired as coach at the young age of 48. Subsequently, as general manager, he rebuilt the team twice with clever trades and draft picks, so the Celtics became, again, a model franchise during the '70s and '80s, when they won five more titles. Although he began to shuck off some of his executive duties in 1984, when he was 67, he continued to consult for the Celtics until his death. In a city rife with historical personages, Auerbach is the only figure for whom a statue was erected while he was still breathing. Made of bronze (wags said brass would have been more appropriate), it stands—or rather sits, as it portrays Auerbach on the bench, his fist classically clenching a game program—in Quincy Market.

Yet from the day he took over the Celtics in 1950, Auerbach never resided in Boston, keeping his home and family in Washington, D.C., while he stayed in a Beantown hotel suite. He also never forgave Boston for failing to sufficiently embrace his team. In 1972 he began an address at a Chamber of Commerce luncheon, "Let me start off by saying this is not quite an honor, my being here. I haven't had too much regard for the Chamber of Commerce in my years in Boston. When the Celtics won 11 championships in 13 years, it was ignored in their own town." Arnold Jacob Auerbach, though paradoxical and highly idiosyncratic, was foremost a direct and visceral man.

He came to Boston after coaching the Washington Capitols and the Tri-Cities Blackhawks, hired without a contract because pro basketball was then such a dicey proposition in a hockey town that the Celtics' owner, Walter Brown, told his new coach, "If you don't win, there'll be no basketball here next year." Auerbach did win, but the Celtics would not finally take the championship until 1956–57, after he obtained the draft rights to Bill Russell from the St. Louis Hawks. Boston lost to the Hawks in the Finals the next season but then won eight titles in a row. Notwithstanding this achievement, Auerbach was often dismissed as the bald fellow who sent Russell out to jump center and reaped what number 6 and his talented teammates sowed. Although the Coach of the Year award is now named the Red Auerbach Trophy, he was not voted the honor until he had won his eighth championship.

Auerbach was never so suicidal, in his coaching days, as to light up his victory cigar except upon the parquet at Boston Garden, but he was nettlesome wherever his team was playing. There was, however, a method to his madness—he knew that his obnoxious behavior on the bench drew fire away from his players—but it was hardly as

ELITE EIGHT Victory stogie firmly in place and hand on Havlicek, Auerbach relished his eighth title with his players, including Cousy (14), K.C. Jones (25), Russell (behind Jones) and Satch Sanders (smiling) in 1965.

REMEMBERING RED

For a gallery of Red Auerbach photos, and Chris Mannix's personal reminiscence of the NBA legend, go to **SI.com/nba**.

if he went against his nature. Auerbach was simply a tiger of an adversary. Wilt Chamberlain so despised him that, until his death, he would not speak Auerbach's name, referring to him only as "that man I don't like." In 1984, when Auerbach was 66, he ran onto the court after a fight broke out during a preseason home game and headed for Philadelphia 76ers center Moses Malone, a man 40 years younger and a foot taller. "You sonuvabitch!" Billy Cunningham, the Sixers' coach, screamed at Auerbach. "You never change."

"You think I'm going to let you take over my building?" Auerbach shouted back as players held him away from a bemused Malone.

In contrast to his temperament, Auerbach's coaching was uncomplicated. He was fond of saying that he coached pros no differently from the players at his first job, St. Albans Prep in D.C. Victory depended on defense and the fast break. Boston used only seven plays. Everybody in the league knew what they were, but the Celtics ran them so efficiently that they couldn't be stopped. "What made Red such a good coach," said John Havlicek, the legendary Celtics sixth man (a role that Auerbach essentially invented), "was his ability to simplify. People always understood what he said."

Russell called Auerbach two things: 1) "my friend" and 2) "a genius." He said, "I don't feel I'd have been nearly as effective with any other man who ever coached a basketball team."

Auerbach was also a brilliant judge of talent, but notwithstanding his draft coups of Russell, Sam Jones, Dave Cowens, Larry Bird and Kevin McHale, he made some ghastly mistakes. In 1963 he spent his top pick on Billy Green, who refused to travel by airplane. Auerbach was lucky, too. He ended up with Havlicek only because the Los Angeles Lakers, drafting right before Boston, took LeRoy Ellis, the player for whom Auerbach really yearned. And Auerbach got Bob Cousy only because he drew the short straw in the 1950 dispersal draft after publicly announcing that he wanted nothing to do with Cousy, who had been a star at Holy Cross. "What am I supposed to do," Auerbach asked, "win games or please the local yokels?"

Of course, in those antediluvian times, he had to do it all himself. Auerbach was his own G.M. He never had a scout, never an assistant coach. Perhaps that's why he liked to acquire players at the end of their careers who would be rejuvenated in Celtics green. He grasped, in a basketball context, what Ben Franklin supposedly said about why a man should court older women: "They are grateful as hell."

On matters of race Auerbach was the NBA's preeminent progressive. In 1950 he drafted the league's first black player, Charles Cooper. When he brought in forward Willie Naulls in 1963, after a seven-year career spent mostly with the woebegone New York Knicks, the Celtics became, without fanfare, the first professional franchise to regularly play and then to start five African-Americans. And, most memorably, when Auerbach gave up coaching, he appointed Russell to succeed him, making Russell the first black coach in a major sport. To call Auerbach the NBA's version of Branch Rickey, the white man who brought Jackie Robinson into organized baseball, is fair enough.

If such exercises in brotherhood did not always sit well with the citizens of Boston, who preferred the hapless white Bruins to the stylish black Celtics, Auerbach never wavered in his intent to field the best team he could. Famously, he deplored statistics and paid his players on the basis of his own subjective standard: what he thought they had contributed to the team effort. As a coach, he made it a point never to fraternize with the players or their wives, but he remained close to his former players even as they grew into their Social Security years.

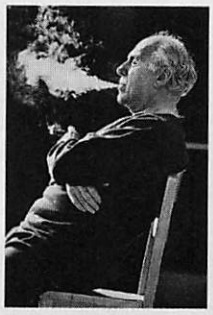
None of his minions had known him when he had the auburn hair that inspired his nickname. That cognomen was bestowed on him when he was growing up in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, where he was born on Sept. 20, 1917. After he accepted a basketball scholarship to George Washington, however, he never again lived in New York. He and his wife, Dorothy, who died in 2000, raised their two daughters, Nancy and Randy, in Washington. At home, he lived a subdued life. He collected, of all things, letter openers, which he searched for in his world travels. (In his younger years he was something of a basketball evangelist, conducting clinics around the globe.)

Auerbach was a natty man, but of limited taste; in clothes, as in basketball, he stuck with what worked for him, so he dressed only in earth tones, leaving the color to his language and antics. He played tennis and handball vigorously, and while he smoked about 10 cigars a day, every day, he rarely drank. Never did he imbibe coffee or eat eggs, so—especially alone in Boston, in his suite at the Lenox Hotel—it was not uncommon for him to start the day by washing down leftover Chinese food with a Coke. Indeed, he positively thrived on Chinese food. Besides the cheers and the boos, it was the one constant in an NBA career that began when the league was young and unspoiled and a man could smoke indoors among friends. □

"You think I'm going to let you take over my building?" Auerbach shouted back as players held him away from a bemused Malone.

1965 Enjoying a Finals win over the Lakers.

1979 Introducing Bird, whom he picked a year earlier.



1988 Puffing through a practice.

1992 At his 75th birthday party with some former troops.

2002 Watching his old team with Russ.

FROM LEFT: AP (2); ELISE AMENDOLA/AP; MANNY MILLAN; JESSE D. GARRABRANT/NBAE/GETTY IMAGES

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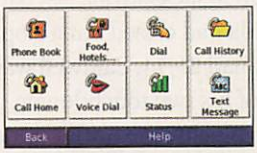

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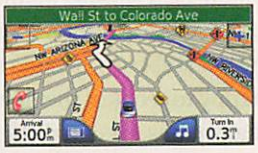

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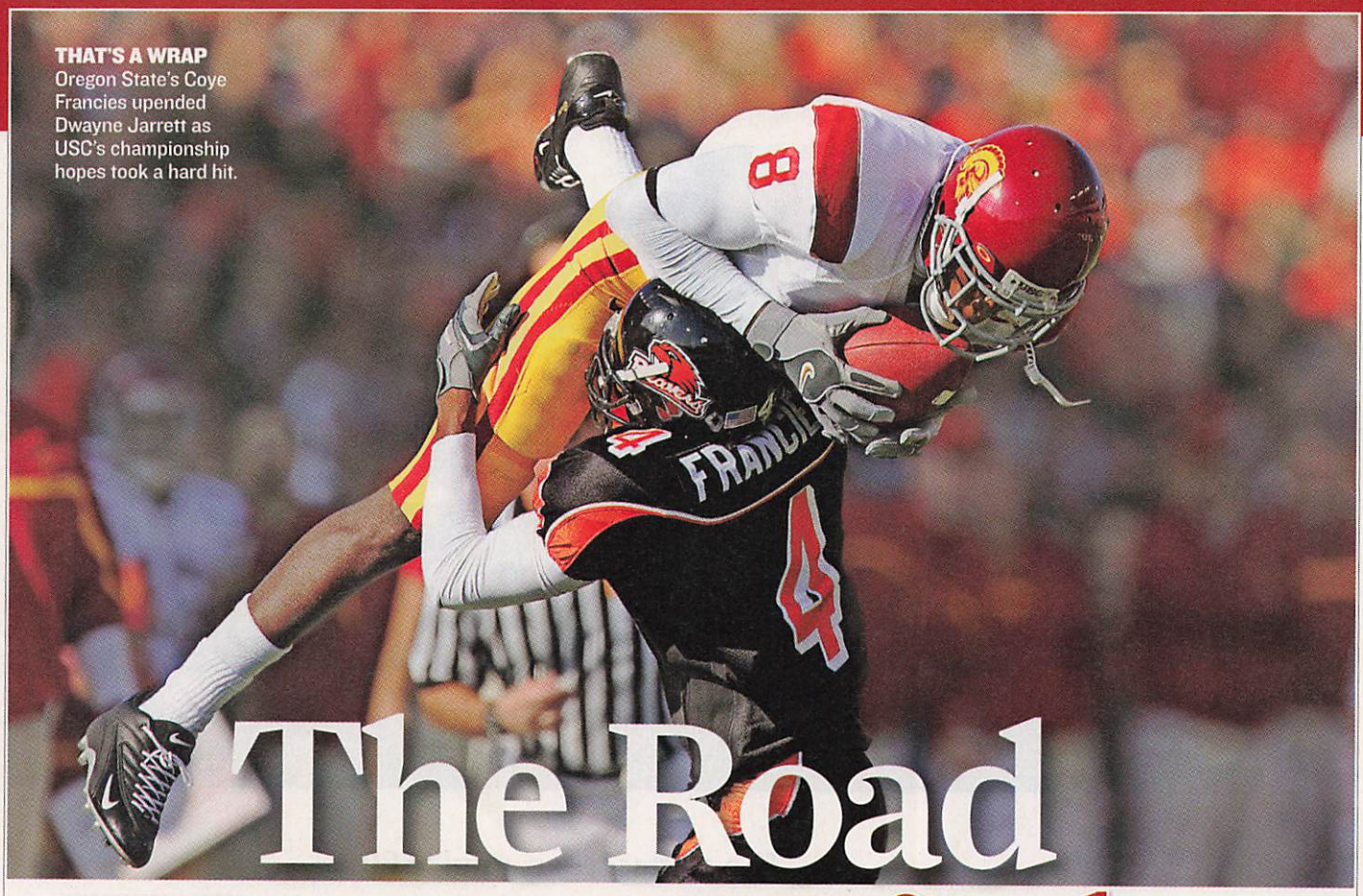


THAT'S A WRAP
Oregon State's Coye Francies upended Dwayne Jarrett as USC's championship hopes took a hard hit.

The Road To a Title

AS DARKNESS fell across Florida's east coast, Andre Caldwell's smile lit up the night. Standing on the field at Alltel Stadium in Jacksonville last Saturday moments after Florida had closed out a sloppy but stubborn Georgia squad 21–14, Caldwell was happy to recount the first of his two touchdowns, a 12-yard reverse. His teammates executed their blocks, the junior wide receiver explained, leaving him just one man to beat. "One-on-one," said Caldwell, who does not want for self-confidence. "I ain't gonna lose too many of those." ¶ He had to raise his voice to be heard over the roar of the Gators fans reacting to news from the public address announcer: "In a game just ending, USC 31 . . . Oregon State . . . 33." ¶ While a door was closing on the previously undefeated Trojans, who fell from third to eighth in the BCS standings, a door was opening for the 7–1 Gators.

USC's loss to Oregon State blew the national championship door wide open. Here is SI's **playoff map,** drawn from the contenders' key remaining games

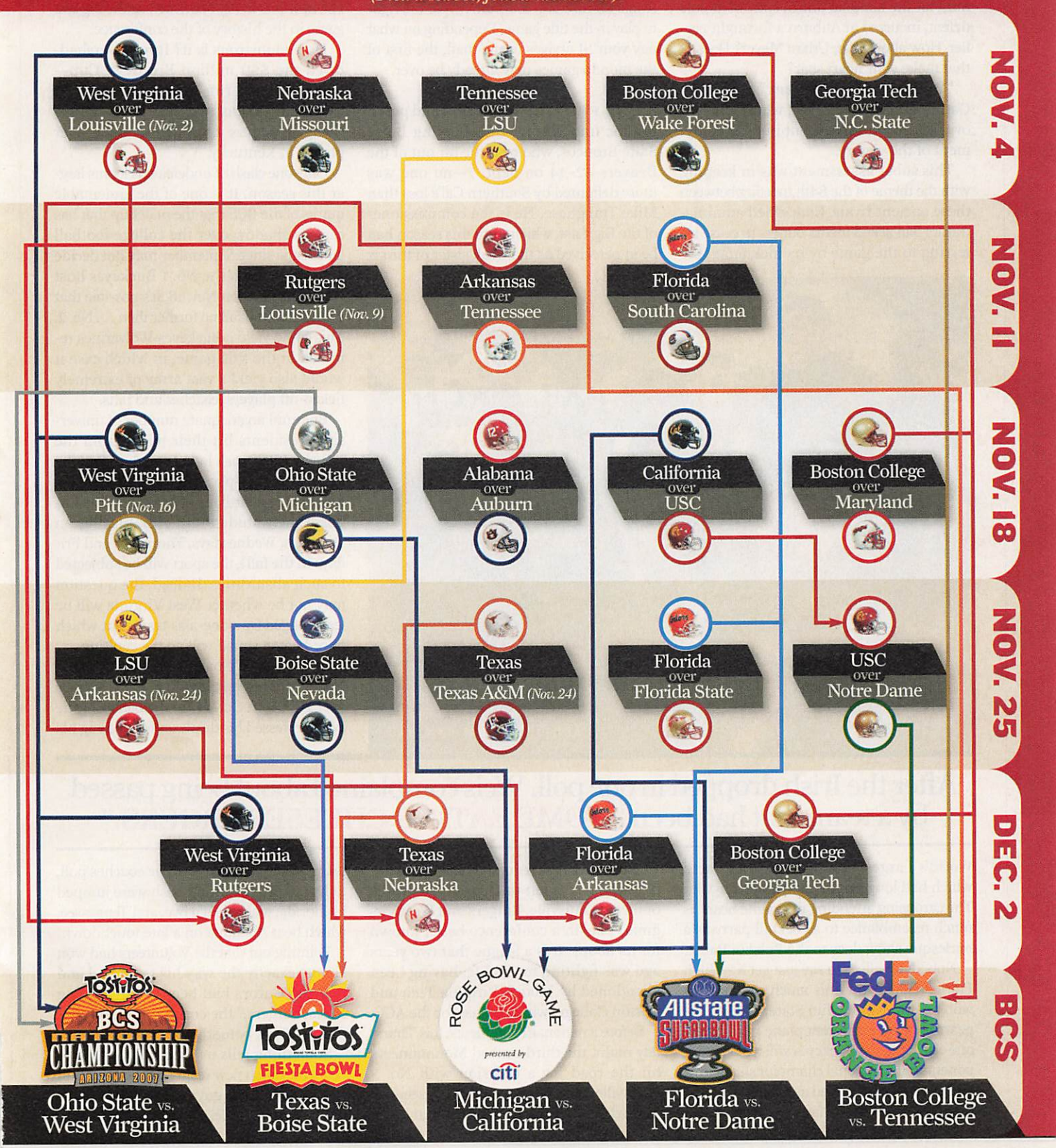
BY AUSTIN MURPHY

Photograph by Peter Read Miller

★★★ 2006 BCS TOURNAMENT ★★★

YES (WEST) VIRGINIA, THERE IS A PLAYOFF—A.K.A. THE NEXT FIVE WEEKS

(Pick a school, follow the arrow)



Having climbed from sixth to fourth in the BCS, Florida remains very much alive in the hunt for the national title in spite of its sole defeat, incurred at Auburn a fortnight earlier. How about that, Urban Meyer? Doesn't that make your heart soar?

"You saw the offense I saw," replied the Gators' gimlet-eyed coach, whose concern over his erratic offense cut into his enjoyment of the victory.

This sober assessment was in keeping with the theme of the 84th meeting between these ancient rivals. Concerned administrators had asked media outlets to cease referring to the game by its nickname, the World's Largest Outdoor Cocktail Party, which had long been a misnomer, anyway. The carousing attending this game bears as much resemblance to a cocktail party as a burlesque show does to the Bolshoi Ballet.

Nobody's willing to say just yet how high Florida can go, but this much we know: It won't get to No. 1. Ohio State, at 9–0, appears to be on a different plane from everyone else. Still, the Buckeyes will need an opponent in the national championship game, and last Saturday served as a kind of kickoff party for the sport's de facto postseason. November features a series of epic matchups, so basically the next five weeks will be a single-elimination tournament for the right to play in the title game. Depending on what day your SI arrives in the mail, the first of the mondo games may already be over.

ASIDE FROM Oregon State—and possibly the undefeated, BCS-busting Boise State Broncos, who beat the tar out of the Beavers 42–14 on Sept. 7—no one was more delighted by Southern Cal's loss than Mike Tranghese. He is the commissioner of the Big East, which until this season had been perceived as the weak sister of the six BCS conferences. Yet of the half-dozen undefeated teams left in Division I-A, three of them (Louisville, Rutgers and West Virginia) play in a conference better known for its hoops. It is a league that two years ago was fighting for its life, having been abandoned by Miami, Virginia Tech and Boston College, which bolted for the ACC.

Before a national TV audience this Thursday night, the third-ranked Mountaineers hit the road for a collision with No. 5 Louisville. It is the first of three consecutive Thursday night Big East games that could be fraught with national title implications (Louisville-Rutgers, then West Virginia–Pitt). For now it is being described as the biggest game in the history of the conference.

How monstrous is it? It has overshadowed the $20 million Breeders' Cup—which will be run down the street at Churchill Downs two days later—and is being hyped as the biggest game ever played in Kentucky.

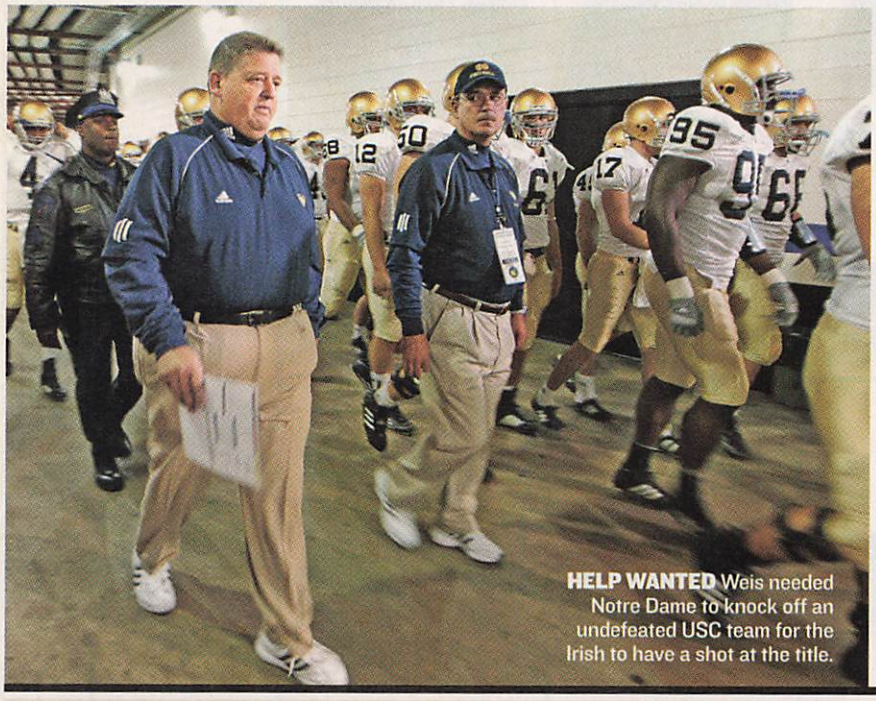
Only one clash of undefeateds looms larger this season. It is one of the lamentable quirks of the BCS that the matchup that has cast its shadow over the college football landscape since September may not decide anything. When the No. 1 Buckeyes host No. 2 Michigan on Nov. 18, it's possible that the loser would fall no further than . . . No. 2. This could yield a Buckeyes-Wolverines rematch in the title game, in which case it would also yield a vast army of extremely ticked-off players, coaches and fans.

But until an adequate number of university presidents lift their heads from the trough of BCS cash long enough to find the spine to adopt a playoff system (funny how those same guardians of education can endorse their student-athletes' playing on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays in the fall), the sport will be subjected to such absurdities. Indeed, the question may not be whether West Virginia will be leapfrogged by a one-loss team, but which once-beaten squad will do the vaulting.

Sorry, Golden Domers. It won't be you at No. 2. After escaping with a 20–17 victory over UCLA on Oct. 21, Irish coach Charlie Weis professed his displeasure at seeing his team drop two notches in the coaches poll, to No. 10. The Fighting Irish were jumped by Florida, which had a bye, and Tennessee, which beat Alabama on a late touchdown.

Pointing out that the Volunteers had won almost exactly the way his team had and that the Gators had been "home eating cheeseburgers," the coach professed confusion. "That befuddles me," he said.

Something tells us Weis will be able to grasp the harsh new reality confronting him and his team: His guys are out of the hunt for the national title. The Irish needed USC



HELP WANTED Weis needed Notre Dame to knock off an undefeated USC team for the Irish to have a shot at the title.

SIMON BRUTY

After the Irish dropped in one poll, Weis complained about being passed by a team that had been "HOME EATING CHEESEBURGERS."

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If there's a one-loss team playing in the national title game, it better be **FROM THE SEC**. So goes the thinking in this proud conference. But which one-loss team is most deserving?

MAD SCRAMBLE Florida jumped to fourth in the BCS standings after beating Georgia, but quarterback Chris Leak and his offense have to get moving if the Gators expect to play for the national championship.

Photograph by Bill Frakes

Ordinary day

Incredible evening

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to keep winning, right up until their matchup in Los Angeles on Nov. 25. Only a stirring, late-season victory over the undefeated Trojans *might* have been enough to propel Notre Dame into the title game.

Does Saturday's loss knock the Trojans out of the national championship picture? "To think that would be a mistake," said coach Pete Carroll, who found much to like in his first regular-season loss since September 2003. Frequently erratic in winning their first six games, these youthful Trojans may have found their identity in defeat. Trailing 33–10 with less than five minutes left in the third quarter, USC came back strong. Quarterback John David Booty led the team on three touchdown drives and looked, for the first time, like a worthy heir to Carson Palmer and Matt Leinart.

That said, the Pac-10 squad that would give Ohio State the best game resides in Berkeley. After dropping its opener, Cal went on a tear, outscoring its next six foes 240–94. A victory over USC on Nov. 18 should ensure the Bears of their first Rose Bowl berth in almost half a century. For now they're biding their time in 10th place in the BCS, a source of irritation to Tennessee, the team that rolled them 35–18 way back on Sept. 2. The Vols' BCS ranking? Number 11.

While he may not sympathize with the Volunteers, Cal coach Jeff Tedford can empathize with them. In 2004 Texas lobbied its way into an at-large BCS bid at the expense of the Bears. This year the defending national champs are sitting seventh in the BCS standings. The Longhorns would love a rematch with an Ohio State team that humbled them in Austin 24–7 on Sept. 9. But the jinnis inhabiting the BCS computers will take into account, disapprovingly, that Texas has only one game left against a ranked opponent (Texas A&M). Another strike against the Longhorns: They face the prospect of playing an unranked Missouri or Nebraska team in the Big 12 title game.

IF THERE'S a one-loss team playing for the national title, it damned well better be from the SEC. So goes the thinking in this proud conference, where the depth and talent make running the table next to impossible.

But which one-loss SEC team is most deserving? Tennessee's defeat came by a single point against the Gators, who were beaten 27–17 by Auburn in a game closer than the score indicates. Students had already commenced "rolling" Toomer's Corner with Charmin when defensive back Patrick Lee returned a fumble for a touchdown with no time on the clock.

A week earlier the Tigers no-showed, for all practical purposes, for an 11 a.m. kickoff against Arkansas, which beat them by 17. On the Wednesday before that game Auburn coach Tommy Tuberville was asked about the BCS during a teleconference. Rather than bite his tongue, Tuberville stated the obvious: that without a playoff it's going to be very tough for an SEC team to get to the national championship game. In the wake of the Arkansas loss, he was accused, unfairly, of creating a distraction for his team.

Cries of "War Eagle!" may yet ring on Dec. 2 in the Georgia Dome, site of the SEC title game. Yes, the Razorbacks lead the SEC West. But no team in the conference has a tougher closing stretch. The Hogs must face South Carolina, Tennessee and LSU. No one would be surprised to see Tuberville and his Tigers in a rematch with Florida with the conference championship on the line.

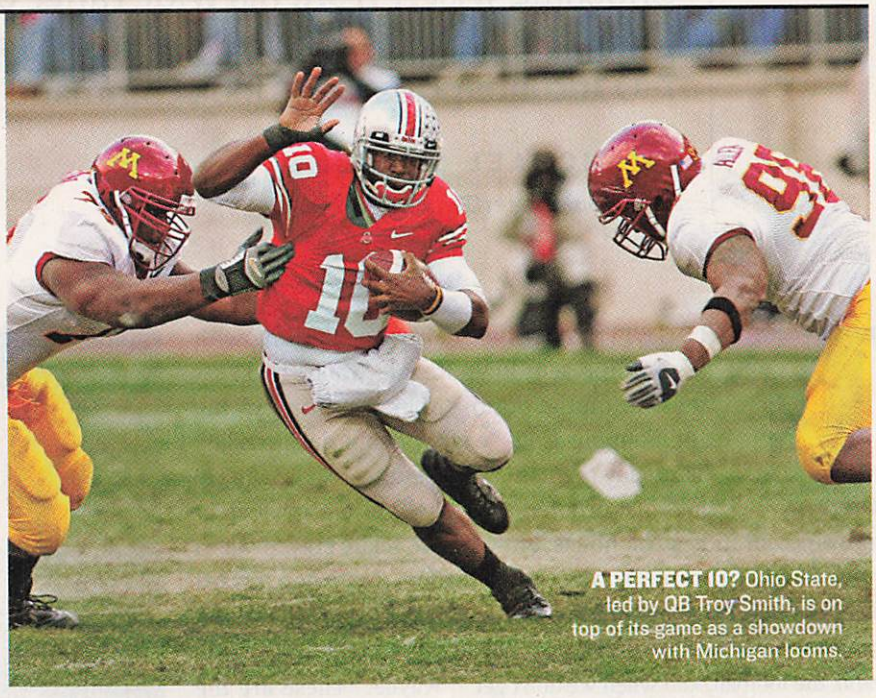
Should the Gators prevail in Atlanta, there's a strong chance *they'll* jump the Mountaineers. The computers prefer Florida to West Virginia, whose nonconference opponents have been Marshall, Eastern Washington, East Carolina and Mississippi State. "This is the fifth top 50 defense we've faced this season," one Gators supporter said before the Georgia game. "West Virginia hasn't faced one."

No Gator would admit to looking that far into the future. Meyer was too busy obsessing on the travails of his offense, which for the second straight game failed to score in the second half. Staying resolutely on message, Caldwell would not directly address a question about his team's improving national title hopes. Instead, he concocted a tortured metaphor: "If we work hard and win every game, the cards will play their own hands."

But what of the Cards? Would he be watching the Louisville–West Virginia game five nights hence?

Big smile. "I might check that out." □

When No. 1 Ohio State hosts No. 2 Michigan on Nov. 18, it's possible that the loser would FALL NO FURTHER than . . . No. 2.



A PERFECT 10? Ohio State, led by QB Troy Smith, is on top of its game as a showdown with Michigan looms.

AARON JOSEFCZYK/ICON SMI

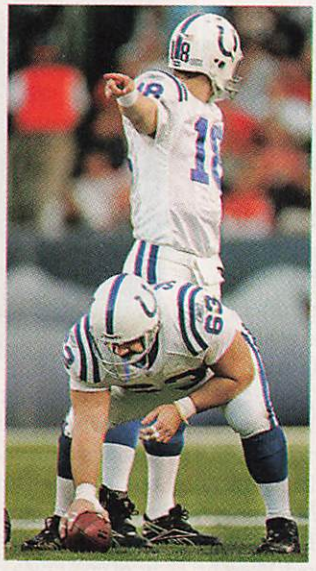
Embarrassment Of Riches

Choosing wisely from his wide range of weapons, Peyton Manning picked apart the vaunted Denver defense as the 7–0 **Indianapolis Colts** took command once more in the AFC

BY MICHAEL SILVER

Photograph by Peter Read Miller

FIDGETING IN his chair while fiddling with his omnipresent PDA, Reggie Wayne had sustenance on the brain. "Man, I'm hungry," the Indianapolis Colts' wiry wideout declared last Thursday night, his smile fading to a frown. He had just ordered a hearty Kansas City strip at Sullivan's, an Indy steak house, but what he really craved was a much tougher part of the cow—some leather. Gesturing toward six of his defensive teammates at a table teeming with seafood appetizers, Wayne explained, "These guys know. Everyone wants the football, and when we don't get it we get mad. That's life with the Colts. Every Monday somebody on the offense is walking around with his lip pulled down. Right now that guy is me."



Three days before facing the Denver Broncos in the first truly big game of the 2006 NFL season, Wayne, the nominal No. 2 receiver on the league's most prolific offense, didn't seem too concerned that Indy was preparing to face a defense that had been practically impenetrable over the first six games. "They're playing with some swagger, but we can go after them," said Wayne. "These are the times when we all want the ball. And if I don't get it, I'll be pissed."

Welcome to Peyton Manning's world, where feeding footballs to famished skill players is a full-time job. Nobody does it better—as the Colts' All-Pro quarterback reminded the world in leading Indy to a stirring 34–31 victory at Invesco Field at Mile High on Sunday. It was a game that debunked many myths: that Denver's defense ranks with the league's alltime great units; that Indy's offense is hamstrung by the departure of All-Pro running back Edgerrin James; that altitude, 76,767 screaming fans and a secondary constructed explicitly to stop Manning can keep him from dominating a big game. Oh, and this one: that the most intense pressure the Colts' quarterback faces is from opposing pass rushers.

After shredding Denver's secondary for 345 passing yards—138 of them to Wayne, who was smiling again after his three touchdowns and 10 catches—Manning knew his task next week would be to placate Marvin Harrison (five catches, 38 yards, no TDs), one of the great receivers in NFL history. The quarterback is so mindful of keeping his receivers happy

ROBERT BECK

DR. Z SAYS

See how Dr. Z's predictions stack up against model Brooklyn Decker's in She Says, Z Says at **SI.com/nfl**.

ALL MINE Along with the rest of Indy's skill-position players, Wayne wanted the ball against Denver, and Manning (opposite) got it to him—10 times, for 138 yards and three touchdowns.

that he wears a cheat sheet on his wristband during games listing the plays that feature each of his starting wideouts. "I'm very conscious of keeping our receivers involved," Manning said after Indy improved to 7–0, setting up another juicy matchup with Tom Brady and the 6–1 New England Patriots in Foxborough, Mass., next Sunday night. "They're both ultracompetitive, and I've never met a great receiver who doesn't have some sort of selfishness, from Jerry Rice on down. But the nice thing about our guys is, if they don't get catches, there's no press conference. We talk about it, and we move on."

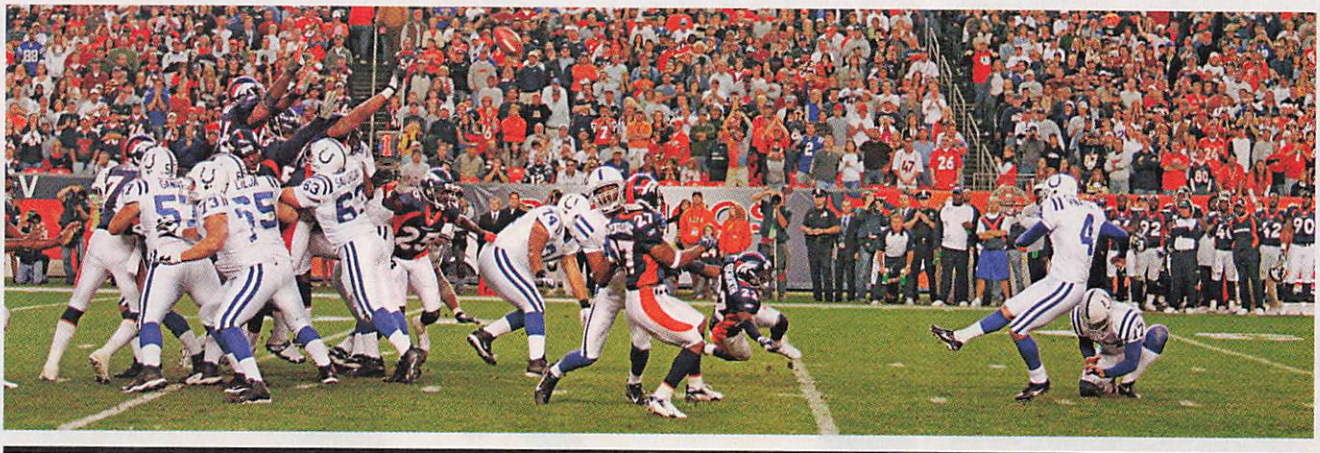
A SHOE-IN After Manning's late-game mastery, the Colts turned to Vinatieri, who calmly poked home the game-winner.

happy either. With All-Pro cornerback Champ Bailey shadowing Harrison and often getting over-the-top help from All-Pro safety John Lynch, Wayne had expected to exploit second-year cornerback Darrent Williams. But he went into the locker room at halftime with just one catch for 12 yards.

Denver's offensive blueprint for beating the Colts—attack Indy's dubious run defense—seemed to be sound, and embattled quarterback Jake Plummer (13 of 21, 174 yards, one touchdown, no interceptions) had his best game of the season. But Manning (32 of 39, 345 yards, three TDs, no picks) took over in the second half, as he and Wayne made Williams look as befuddled as a Borat interview subject. It was for just these moments that Indy re-signed Wayne, 27, to a six-year, $39.5 million deal

called for a pump-and-go. Williams bit, and Wayne zipped past him down the left sideline, catching a perfectly thrown touch pass in stride. Wayne then snagged the two-point conversation attempt to put Indy up 31–28.

The Broncos tied the game on Jason Elam's 49-yard field goal with 1:49 remaining—too much time. How often had Broncos fans watched John Elway thrive in similar circumstances? Now the breezy confidence could be found on the visitors' sidelines: *We've got Peyton Manning, and you don't.* It took him seven plays, including consecutive completions to Wayne, to set up Adam Vinatieri, the former Patriots kicker who's the most clutch performer at his position in NFL history. Had there been a thin vertical glass rod directly between the goalposts, Vinatieri's kick would have shat-



Says Manning, "The nice thing is that if our guys don't get catches, there's **NO PRESS CONFERENCE**. We talk about it and move on."

The talk Manning had with his offense with 18 seconds left in the first half on Sunday may not have been overly profound, but the transformation it helped spark was impressive. His speech came in the huddle as Indy, trailing 14–6, prepared to run out the clock at its own 14-yard line. Denver's bend-but-don't-break defensive scheme had limited its previous six opponents to 44 total points and a pair of inconsequential TDs; Indy had been similarly subdued in the first two quarters, settling for a pair of field goals after drives of 8:08 and 6:06. "We're killing ourselves," Manning barked. "The only thing stopping us is us. So let's do what the f--- we're supposed to do and finish these drives."

At that point Wayne wasn't particularly

last February, essentially choosing him over James, his friend and former University of Miami teammate who's now with Arizona.

Manning connected with Wayne for two touchdowns in the third quarter to take the lead, and then, after rookie Mike Bell's one-yard touchdown dive put the Broncos (5–2) up 28–23 with 6:54 left, the Colts quarterback countered by going to Wayne four times on the ensuing possession. The last completion, with 3:35 to go, came on a variation of a five-yard in pattern that some opposing defenses refer to as Indy. Operating from the shotgun on third-and-two from the Denver 19, Manning guessed that Williams would squat on the short route and

tered it. And just like that, with its first impressive victory of the season, Indy became the first team in 75 years to have begun consecutive seasons 7–0. Unlike last year, when the Colts won 13 straight before becoming discombobulated—and ultimately suffering a stunning playoff upset to the eventual Super Bowl–champion Pittsburgh Steelers—Tony Dungy's team does not appear to be in danger of peaking too early.

Heading home early on Monday morning from an Indianapolis bar where he and some teammates had celebrated the win, Wayne reflected on the likely ramifications of his big day: This week, he knows, Harrison will be the hungry one. "Here's some advice for the New England game," Wayne said. "Don't put me on your fantasy team." □

ROBERT BECK

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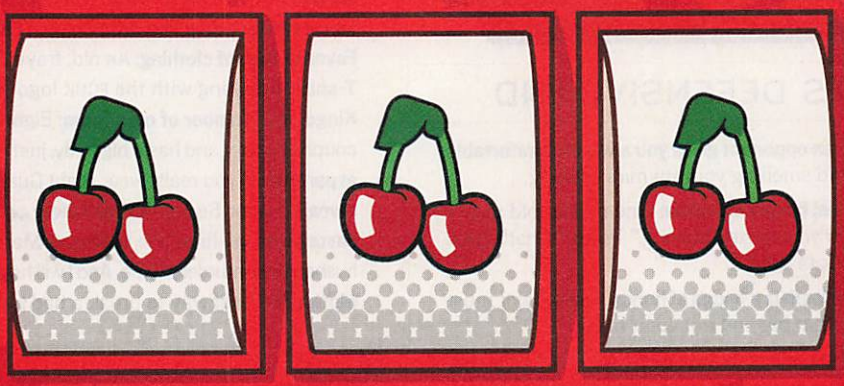

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SI///SELF-PORTRAIT

MICHAEL Strahan

with FRANZ LIDZ

NFL GIANTS DEFENSIVE END

Putting the perfect hit on an opponent gives you a warm, comfortable feeling, like waking up and smelling your mama's cooking.

I'm 34, and I sometimes feel like an old-timer. One rookie told me, "I was in fourth grade when you started playing." I said, "That's cool. Now shut up and get back to work."

The gap between my front teeth is a badge of honor. People say I must be confident to have one that big and not get it fixed.

Playing defensive end is like idling in the middle of a four-way stop with cars coming at you from every direction. In the collision, you get twisted. Later, you wonder how the human body could bend that way.

A lot of rookies show up wearing a Mr. T starter kit. They've got chains with the NFL logo and custom-designed emblems. Even the chains are diamonds. Talk about expensive watches! Guys walk around with a house on their wrists. You could buy Vermont with some of those watches.

Sportswriters think I'm mean because I won't discuss my recent divorce with them. But my private life is private, and no amount of prying is going to get me to talk about it. A reporter once called me a nice a------. I laughed and took it as a compliment.

My greatest strength is not taking things seriously and rolling with the punches.

The scariest thing in my fridge is a jar of mayonnaise. It's been in there so long it has evolved into another life form.

The Gap is missing out by not offering me an endorsement deal. I could look straight into the camera, say, "Get into the Gap" and then smile.

I would never want to be a sportswriter. Athletes are too difficult.

If the NFL had its way, we'd all be the same player, making the same amount of money with nothing spontaneous ever happening. The league office should loosen up and allow for more individuality.

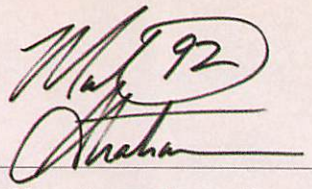
No opponent's ever called me a name that made me want to beat him up in the tunnel after a game. My brothers are another story. They used to call me BOB, which stands for Booty on Back. They'd say, "Your butt's so big, you have to reach over your shoulder for your wallet."

I'm superstitious. If there's something on the floor, be it a newspaper or a candy wrapper, I have to walk over it backward before it moves, or put both feet on it and stand over it.

I saw one player who had been caught using steroids and figured he must have bought a discount brand over the Internet. He had the worst body on the team. I'd never seen a butt with so much cellulite.

If I could be any vegetable, it would be a zucchini. Nobody likes zucchinis, and nobody eats them. They just sit on your plate. Sure, I'd only be a vegetable, but I'd stay alive.

I wish I knew when death was coming so I could spend my money down to the last penny.



FILL IN THE BLANKS:

My secret passion: Antique shopping. **My most overused expression:** "Let me tell you something. . . ." **Most influential children's book:** *Charlotte's Web.* **Childhood idol:** Herschel Walker. **Favorite movie:** *Braveheart.* **Favorite household chore:** Cooking and washing the dishes simultaneously. **Favorite dish to cook:** Chicken Marsala. **Favorite cereal:** Frosted Flakes. **Favorite kitchen appliance:** Blender. **Opponent I most dread facing:** The Grim Reaper. **Favorite actress:** Meryl Streep. **Favorite item of clothing:** An old, frayed pair of Binn jeans. **Favorite T-shirt:** Anything with the FCUK logo (French Connection United Kingdom). **Number of cars I own:** Eight. **Favorite one:** 1998 Bentley coupe. It's sexy and has a big body, just like me. **Question asked most at parties:** Do you really wear Right Guard? **Biggest secret (that I can reveal):** I wear Secret. **Talent I most covet:** Playing guitar or piano. **Favorite movie line:** "I'm Maximus Meridius. Father to a slain son, husband to a murdered wife. And I will have my vengeance." *(Gladiator)* **Motto:** The best way to break a bad habit is to never start it.

> "If I ever met the guy who invented football, I'd slap him."

Stats

1 Schools (Texas Southern) that offered him a scholarship.

22½ Sacks in 2001, an NFL record.

7 Seasons his Uncle Art played in NFL and CFL.

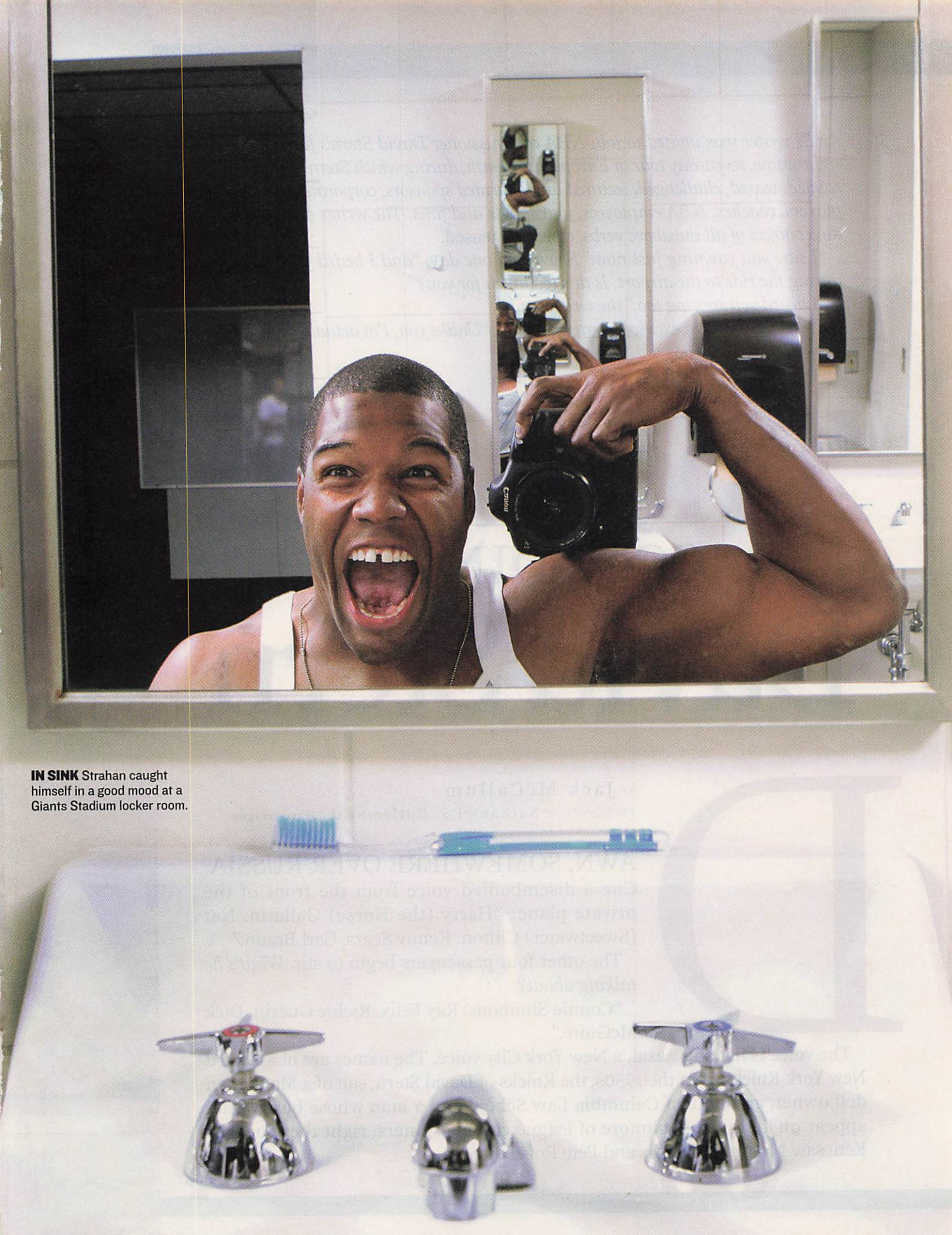
Age at which his family moved to West Germany; his father served there as a major in the U.S. Army.

9

27 Length, in days, of his run for a seat on the Montclair (N.J.) Township Council in 2004; he dropped out, saying he'd probably be too busy to serve.

2:42 Time left in the final game of 2001 when Strahan got his record-breaking sack against Green Bay; on that play Brett Favre rolled out and then fell to the ground at Strahan's feet.

MICHAEL STRAHAN



IN SINK Strahan caught himself in a good mood at a Giants Stadium locker room.

An SI writer was invited to join NBA commissioner David Stern's five-country, eight-game, seven-day tour of Europe last month, during which Stern schmoozed, cajoled, teased, challenged, lectured and charmed sponsors, corporate executives, players, coaches, NBA employees, journalists and fans. The writer also was the direct object of all the above verbs, especially teased.

"I saw you yawning just now," Stern said one day, "and I heard you snoring during the ride to the airport. Is this too much for you?"

"I heard you snoring too," the writer said.

"Yes, but I have an excuse," Stern answered. "Unlike you, I'm actually working."

The World ACCORDING TO David Stern

by Jack McCallum

Photograph by Nathaniel S. Butler/NBAE/Getty Images

DAWN, SOMEWHERE OVER RUSSIA. Cue a disembodied voice from the front of the private plane: "Harry (the Horse) Gallatin. Nat (Sweetwater) Clifton. Kenny Sears. Carl Braun."

The other four passengers begin to stir. *What's he talking about?*

"Connie Simmons. Ray Felix. Richie Guerin. Dick McGuire."

The voice is flat and nasal, a New York City voice. The names are of assorted New York Knicks from the 1950s, the Knicks of David Stern, son of a Manhattan deli owner, graduate of Columbia Law School and a man whose bust would appear on a Mount Rushmore of league commissioners, right there next to Kenesaw Mountain Landis and Pete Rozelle.

SPALDING
NBA
OFFICIAL GAME BALL

Stern offers his early-morning litany to rouse himself between yawns and stretches. In the course of 60 hours he has flown across the Atlantic, taken a dozen meetings, answered questions at a half-dozen press conferences, shaken a thousand hands, signed a hundred autographs, witnessed basketball games in Barcelona and Rome and pressed the flesh at two postgame receptions. He has slept for 90 minutes of this 4½-hour flight from Rome to Moscow (which turns into 5½ hours because of fog), stretched out on the front couch of the Gulfstream-4, his feet resting on a mound of magazines *(Variety, Forbes, Sports Business Journal)* and newspapers *(International Herald-Tribune, The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal)* that he has perused and gutted. "I'm an inveterate clipper," he says, showing a binder groaning with paper. He'll snip anything that draws his interest, particularly stories about the environment and medical breakthroughs—along with, of course, pieces on sports and business.

But an hour and a half of shut-eye is enough. Maybe not for the other passengers, all of whom are younger than the 64-year-old Stern, but enough for the commissioner, who seems to draw

Stern relishes being the indefatigable iron man who outwo

life from the enervation of others. "He crushes us," says Andrew Messick, senior vice president of NBA International and two decades Stern's junior. "Just crushes us."

AS HIS EYES adjust to the half-light, Stern turns on his BlackBerry. It brings bad news: an account of the arrest of Pacers swingman Stephen Jackson for firing a gun outside an Indianapolis strip club. (One week later Jackson would plead not guilty to charges of battery, disorderly conduct and felony criminal recklessness.) The commissioner shakes his head as he scrolls. "I wish we could legally ban players from carrying guns," he says. "But we can't." (On a conference call with journalists three weeks later Stern would issue a plea to players to leave their guns at home.)

Stern smiles as he reads an invitation from the Charlotte Bobcats to attend their first home game. "Guess I'll have to do the car wash," he says. *Car wash* is his term for a full day of activities: breakfast speech, lunch with owners, perhaps an afternoon sit-down with local movers and shakers, then the game. Immediately ahead, as the plane descends, lies the intimidating Moscow car wash, beginning at 10:30 a.m.: sponsor meetings, interviews, a photo shoot at Red Square, a wreath-laying at the grave of legendary Soviet coach Aleksandr Gomelsky, a game between the Los Angeles Clippers and CSKA Moscow and a reception at the home of U.S. ambassador William Burns—and that's all followed by a midnight flight to Paris.

But Stern is energized. He is eager to see his old friends in Russia, which he first visited as commissioner in 1988 (when the national anthem still mentioned Lenin), and he isn't even bothered when fog forces the plane to divert to an airport farther from downtown Moscow, complicating a schedule that already seemed impossible. Stern enjoys the thought that he will be taxed to the maximum and chuckles when he imagines his staff on the ground racing from Sheremetyevo Airport to pick him up at the more remote Domodedovo.

"We could just fly straight to Paris," says Messick, half joking.

Stern shakes his head and smiles. "No matter what," he says, "we are going to this freaking game."

The commissioner is in the middle of a 17,000-mile airborne whistle-stop tour that will enable him to monitor his league's latest ambitious international venture, officially called NBA Europe Live Presented by EA Sports. (In the NBA something is always *presented* by something.) Stern sent four of his teams (the Philadelphia 76ers, Phoenix Suns, San Antonio Spurs and Clippers) to hold a week of training camp in four cities (Barcelona; Treviso, Italy; Lyon, France; and Moscow, respectively) and play games in three others (Rome, Paris and Cologne, Germany). The teams and locales were carefully matched: The Sixers' Allen Iverson is extremely popular in Spain, where they apparently like antiestablishment figures; Suns coach Mike D'Antoni was a prominent player and coach in Italy; and Spurs guard Tony Parker is a Frenchman. As for the Clippers in Moscow, well, somebody had to go—it's a burgeoning market.

WHEN IN ROME Stern met with all manner of dignitaries on his trip, including Walter Veltroni, mayor of the Italian capital.

FOR SOMEONE who has been in the public eye for so long—he was named commissioner in 1984, 14 years before Major League Baseball's Bud Selig, 11 before the NHL's Gary Bettman and five before the NFL's Paul Tagliabue, who was recently succeeded by Roger Goodell—Stern has been remarkably successful in deflecting requests to participate in behind-the-scenes profiles. He has agreed to this one only after some negotiation and

RANDY BELICE/NBAE/GETTY IMAGES

on the understanding that the NBA's international business *(page 63)* will play a prominent role in the story. (Stern will no doubt think it's not prominent enough and will make his feelings known.) Over the course of the trip, pieces of his personal life slip out, though rarely does he offer them.

For example, Stern loved the musical *Jersey Boys*, the story of Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons. He thinks of himself as a cross between a Manhattanite (Stern's Delicatessen was in Chelsea) and a Jersey boy (he moved to Teaneck at age 12 and attended Rutgers). He was, he says, 114th in a class of 530 at Teaneck High; he still remembers the stats.

Unlike his close friend and former assistant general counsel Bettman—they talk every week—Stern is not a big hockey fan. He "sort of" follows the New York Mets, he says, because he and his sons, Andy and Eric, used to watch them together when the boys were growing up. (Andy, 40, is a managing director of an international real estate development company; Eric, 38, is senior counselor to the governor of Montana.) Stern occasionally takes in New York Yankees games with George Steinbrenner in the owner's box. "But if I'm going to watch anything besides the NBA, it's probably pro football," he says. "I'm a Giants fan."

In the past five years Stern has had a few arthroscopic knee surgeries and sometimes limps slightly. But he played recreational hoops as a youth and looks to be, and says he is, in excellent shape. He watches his diet and drinks alcohol sparingly, though on busy days he does ladle in the caffeine. He also has an incurable sweet tooth. (On the plane he tears into the disgusting-looking confection known as Swedish Fish.) He plays tennis regularly, often with his wife of 43 years, Dianne, a freelance writer. (They met through family friends in Teaneck and married during Stern's first year at Columbia Law School.) The two also enjoy taking long walks and hikes; on David's only real day off during the European tour, the couple legged it for hours through the streets of Paris.

Though Stern's inner compass in leading the NBA has been largely unerring, he has trouble finding his way back from somewhere if his wife is not along. As he enters hotels, for example, he invariably makes the wrong turn to get to the elevator, though he makes it decisively. "He has no sense of direction," says Dianne, "yet he always knows where he's going."

HAD THE client list of Proksauer Rose, the Manhattan firm at which Stern began working immediately after graduating from law school in 1966, not included the NBA, the commissioner believes he would have remained, quite happily, "an intense litigator," one active in the New York State Bar Association. Instead the young Stern was assigned to NBA matters and eventually left Proksauer Rose, in '78, to become the league's general counsel. He was named executive vice president in '80 and the league's fourth commissioner in '84, succeeding Larry O'Brien.

rks, outschmoozes and outlasts everyone else in the room.

BETTER TO GIVE Stern and Clippers owner Donald Sterling (right) presented gifts to Russian defense minister Sergei Ivanov.

JENNIFER POTTHEISER/NBAE/GETTY IMAGES

In the late 1980s and early '90s, Larry Bird, Magic Johnson and Michael Jordan helped Stern overcome the league's severe financial and image problems and usher in an era of unprecedented popularity. As they began to retire, there was talk that the commissioner would exit as well. But while Stern says he has had "myriad opportunities" to run companies and write his memoirs, he insists that he has never come close to leaving the hot seat.

"Sure, July Fourth comes and, man, you're really tired," he says. "But [in the NBA] there is always something to challenge you, always something to keep you young. I'm being completely honest when I say I'm not even thinking about retiring." The consensus among his employees is that he's telling the truth.

Outspoken though he often is, in public Stern stays away from politics. The wellspring of his power, after all, is the NBA owners, some of whom have blue-state views and some red-state. But in private the commissioner leans to the left. As he sits in the drab Domodedovo Airport lobby, waiting for his documents to be checked and his harried caravan of drivers to arrive, he sees Vice President Dick Cheney scowling on a Russian TV station. Stern lets out a hoot of derision.

"With our leadership," he says, "we are in as big a trouble in this country right now as I can ever remember." As he and Dianne make their way through the *New York Times* each morning, they swap sections, compare notes and generally commiserate about the Administration in Washington.

OVER THE past months the NBA drafted a mission statement of which Stern is exceedingly proud. It talks about values and social responsibility, and it pledges that NBA employees will "conduct ourselves in accordance with the highest standards of honesty, truthfulness, ethics and fair dealing." Stern's most sat-

NOT ALL FUN AND GAMES Stern paid his respects at the grave of Hall of Fame Soviet basketball coach Aleksandr Gomelsky.

fice here," Stern says as he rides through the streets of Moscow with Rob Millman, an NBA International vice president.

China presents an even greater conflict for Stern because it has both colossal business potential and a terrible human rights record. The commissioner has traveled throughout the country, both for business and to satisfy his intellectual curiosity, and there is no doubt that China is critical to the global future of the NBA. Yet its repressive policies fly in the face of the league's mission statement.

"Believe me, the China situation bothers me," Stern says one day, traveling between Paris and Cologne. "And a voice at home [he means Dianne, who is more outspoken about politics than he is] reminds me about it all the time." He sighs heavily. "But at the end of the day I have a responsibility to my owners to make money," he says. "I can never forget that, no matter what my personal feelings might be." Stern doesn't expand on that thought, which is atypical; his mind is nothing if not lawyerly, able to slither around and through the most vexing questions. But the road to China is littered with philosophical land mines, and as the NBA snuggles up to Beijing, it will be interesting to see if Stern speaks out when he's troubled.

It troubles him that the league is doing more business in countries with questionable government policies.

isfying recent business relationship has been with Adidas, which also espouses a make-the-world-better philosophy.

Now, there is plenty of room for cynicism when bottom-liners start talking altruism. And the many NBA haters in the U.S. would suggest that players such as Stephen Jackson are living repudiations of the league's mission statement. But Stern holds that the document has had a "profound effect" on him and on those who work for him. He hardly gets through a day without mentioning the NBA's Basketball Without Borders program, which each summer sends dozens of players to conduct clinics in far-flung and often impoverished parts of the world, and he fumes when the league is criticized for too often airing its NBA Cares spots. "We're going to keep right on showing them," the commissioner says pugnaciously, "because social responsibility is extremely important to us."

It troubles him, then, that the league is increasingly doing business in countries with abhorrent or at least questionable government policies. Three days after Burns welcomes the NBA delegation to Spaso House following the Clippers' 94–75 loss to CSKA (formerly known as the Red Army team), the ambassador stands in the rain among other mourners at the funeral of Anna Politkovskaya, the 13th journalist killed since Russian president Vladimir Putin came to power in 2000. Politkovskaya, like the others, was critical of Putin's government. (Her killer or killers had not been apprehended at week's end.) Stern is intimately familiar with the details of the murder and decries it—suspecting, as many do, that government officials had a hand in it. Yet Russia, now fertile ground for capitalists, is a prime NBA business target. "We have to think about opening an of-

Closer to home lies a neon-lit dilemma. Years ago Stern turned up his nose at the mere mention of Las Vegas because he didn't want anyone connecting the NBA to gambling. He still doesn't. But times change. He okayed the 2007 All-Star Game to be played in Vegas and—lo and behold—the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority is an official sponsor of the Europe Live tour. Which explains why the Honorable Oscar Goodman, who was a mob lawyer (his own description) before being elected mayor of Las Vegas, is a prominent figure on the tour, escorting two showgirls done up in blue and pink. Stern doesn't pal around with Hizzoner (who recently advocated cutting off the thumbs of graffiti artists who deface public property in Vegas), but he doesn't shun him either.

AS ONE TRAVELS with Stern, it becomes hard not to compare him with another liberal and pragmatist. David Joel Stern is, indisputably, the William Jefferson Clinton of commissioners. They have met on several occasions, and Stern and his wife talk with admiration of Clinton's friendliness and his ability to expound on almost any subject. The commissioner is nowhere near as charismatic or as recognizable as the 42nd president, but he's a rock star compared with his peers: Bettman and Goodell, like Tagliabue, come across as well-dressed lawyers (which they are), and Selig is as beguiling as a small-town hardware salesman.

JENNIFER POTTHEISER/NBAE/GETTY IMAGES

"Charisma is at some level the art of relating to people," says Don Luongo, a retired U.S. Secret Service agent who sometimes works as Stern's one-man security force, "and that's what the commissioner is all about." Luongo knows about charisma, having been assigned to both Clinton and Ronald Reagan, men he holds in high esteem for their ability to connect to the masses. "Plus, Mr. Stern's energy level is off the chart," says Luongo. "People *feel* that. I feel that. I feed off it."

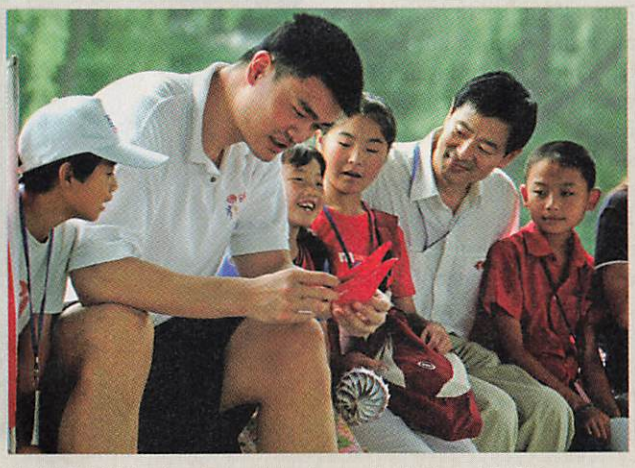
At 5' 9" Stern is not physically imposing, but he looks good. He has a full head of gray hair and wears expensive suits, tailored shirts and classy ties. (Purple is a favorite color.) His self-confidence is unwavering, as might be expected from a man who reportedly makes more than $10 million a year and has increased league revenues twelvefold. At every stop along the European trail he is asked to sign autographs by both young and old. He relishes the attention.

Like Clinton, Stern also relishes being the indefatigable iron man, the alpha male who outworks, outschmoozes and outlasts everyone else in the room. He could squeeze in a short nap at the Swissôtel in Moscow, but having found the downstairs coffee lacking, he suddenly claps his hands and, sounding like a high school kid organizing a beer party, says to a reporter and two NBA

the Business *of* Basketball

No U.S. professional league has a greater global presence than the NBA, thanks to a forward-thinking commissioner, an aggressive and comprehensive marketing strategy, and a game that translates easily

THE BOTTOM line for the NBA's international business *is* the bottom line: It's very lucrative. International revenues are about $150 million—or 5% of the league's total—and they come from three sources: foreign TV contracts (NBA games and other programming are shown in 215 countries, in at least 43 languages, through deals with 164 TV partners), merchandising (one quarter of the sales of jerseys and other apparel takes place outside the U.S.) and licensing agreements (of which there are 18, with companies such as Adidas, Coca-Cola, McDonald's and Nike).



NG HAN GUAN/AP

NEXT UP Yao has helped the league build ties with China, which could one day have teams playing under an NBA banner.

Overseas audiences want to see the product—hence the NBA's Europe Live tour and plans for a return trip in 2007. Still, even as European players stream into the NBA (there are more than 50 on opening night rosters), the possibility of an NBA Europe division, which commissioner David Stern began musing about in the early '90s, has grown more distant. That frustrates some in the Old World. "We always hear, 'We want to do it, but we need a little more study,' " says Begoña Liso, head of sports acquisition for Sogecable, a network in Spain. "Then four more years go by, and it's, 'Let's give it a little more study.' We do wonder if it will ever happen."

Probably not. As much as Europe embraces the NBA, the league's biggest opportunity for growth is in China. Europe's entrenched basketball structure—in-country pro leagues, amateur teams and club teams, national teams, the Euroleague—and its decaying arenas work against an NBA partnership. China, by contrast, is a blank slate. A five- or six-team NBA China division is already on the radar screen for Stern, who thinks the Chinese government would build in six months the necessary half-dozen facilities.

NBA business is already booming in the Far East. The league has offices in Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong and Tokyo—by contrast, the Paris office handles all of Europe, the Middle East and Africa—and Stern expects the number of employees in China to double, to 100, by the 2008 Olympics. There are plans to send an NBA Developmental League team to China this season to play exhibition games against the national team in preparation for '08.

NBA merchandise is already sold at more than 20,000 retail outlets in China. The NBA has marketing partnerships with six major companies in the country: Amway, China Mobile, Li-Ning (a sporting goods company), Nokia, Red Bull and Tsinghua TongFang (a high-tech firm). To feed NBA games and programming to 30 million fans per week in China, the league has a dizzying number (83) of TV contracts.

China represents a perfect storm of conditions to foster growth: a country with an expanding capitalist economy, an international icon (7' 6" Yao Ming of the Houston Rockets) and a coming mega-event (the Olympics). Hoops executives in Europe clamoring for an NBA division should realize that Stern is behaving like an ambivalent exotic dancer: He's showing a lot of leg, but he's not going to take it all off. —J.M.

employees, "Hey, let's go to my room! I've got a great cappuccino machine!" And all adjourn there. Later, en route to the ambassador's house after the game, Stern dozes, openmouthed, but suddenly cuts into a conversation with a comment about Russian basketball history.

"My only explanation," whispers Messick from the seat behind the commissioner, "is that he hears when he sleeps."

STERN'S ITINERARY in Europe has been worked out almost to the minute by his executive assistant, Sue-Ann Pisack, who goes through her day with a cellphone in her ear, a BlackBerry in her hand and anxiety in her chest. Before each meeting, gab session, dedication ceremony, press conference or reception, the commissioner is briefed by the p.r. person on-site, an NBA International staffer or perhaps Adam Silver, the deputy commissioner. They cover everything. "We don't suggest taking the lift at the arena," Sau Ching Cheong, a p.r. person from NBA China, tells Stern before he heads for the CSKA Universal Sports Complex in northern Moscow. (The elevator is at best cranky and at worst nonfunctional.) Stern listens while others talk, but more than likely he will follow his own script and instincts (though he doesn't take the lift).

He has been traveling abroad for so long that he knows not only the names of international basketball officials and TV executives, but also their kids' names. Nonetheless, Stern all but wins the day just by showing up. "Sitting down with him says everything about the commissioner and his organization," says Carlos Campos, an Adidas Spain exec who takes a meeting with Stern in Barcelona. "We have never even met [FIFA president] Sepp Blatter, far less had a meeting with him."

Stern's attention to detail is astonishing. As he greets Coca-Cola officials in Barcelona, his first question is, "How's Sprite Zero doing?" Perusing a notebook full of bar graphs and sales-figure charts during a meeting in Rome, he stops and points to one. "You left a percent sign out here," he says to Umberto Pieraccioni, Adidas Italy's managing director. Before the tour's final doubleheader, in Cologne on Oct. 11, the commissioner's eyes run over the seating chart. "How about if you move George Bodenheimer over here?" he says. The ABC Sports/ESPN honcho is duly moved. On planes and in cars Stern usually decides who sits where, calling for a reporter to sit near him on occasion and, on others, exiling the scribe to a different seat or different vehicle, depending on whether or not he feels like answering questions.

EVEN WHEN he is in the mood he doesn't speak—he filibusters, uninterrupted, with Mohammed-on-the-mountain hauteur. In Stern's press conferences there is very little Q and much A. But he does not string together nonsense in Rumsfeldian fashion. (Man, would he hate being labeled Rumsfeldian.) He can be repetitive and evasive, but there is no underground collection of Stern verbal miscues. His hands move as he talks, suggesting a conductor in mid-symphony, but he will often stop and stare into space as he searches for the precise word or phrase before resuming, as Messick says, "in complete sentences." There are times when he seems to be finished but then adds his pet phrase "And by the way. . . ." For Stern, *by the way* is not an introduction to a throwaway line; it's a signal to keep listening.

He doesn't just seize and hold the floor with underlings and overmatched reporters. When former NBA center Vlade Divac arrives for a powwow in Barcelona to discuss the possibility of Real Madrid, the Spanish League team for which Divac is now an executive, joining the NBA, the commissioner disarms him immediately. "Vlade, why don't you flop for us," Stern says, alluding to Divac's well-deserved reputation for faking fouls. Divac laughs and feigns falling. But in the course of the 45-minute meeting Stern makes it clear that Real Madrid should get back in line and that the NBA will decide who joins the NBA, thank you very much. Divac gets in about, oh, a dozen words.

At a Barcelona sit-down with Jonathan Ford, the London-based sports sponsorship manager for Coca-Cola, Stern was, to an extent, the party with hat in hand: The NBA wants more European sponsorship dollars from Coke, which was a major sponsor of the World Cup, and Ford is reluctant. During the meeting Stern preaches about the NBA's international appeal ("We are serious about becoming the most respected sports league in the world"), plays the underdog card ("We know we have our work cut out for us here with you guys") and gently

HEAD HONCHOS Stern and Euroleague Basketball CEO Jordi Bertomeu (left) received a warm welcome from the Cologne crowd.

CATHERINE STENKESTE/NBAE/GETTY IMAGES

His attention to detail is astonishing. He greets Coca-Cola officials with, "How's Sprite Zero doing?"

DH

NO DH

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teases Ford, an unabashed soccer fan, about the racial makeup of Britain's national team. "It's the one place where your colonial policies might've had some latter-day benefits," Stern jokes.

Ford may not be convinced about the future relationship between his company and the NBA, but he is convinced about Stern. "Just meeting with him was fantastic," says Ford. "He is one of the forefathers of sports marketing."

THERE ARE stories that Stern can be a fire-breathing dragon. Ask for confirmation, and some NBA staffers will roll their eyes in affirmation. "In the early days," remembers former NBA executive Rick Welts, who came to the league in 1982, "there would invariably be a point during the day when he would absolutely destroy you. You'd feel as tall as an ant over something you mishandled." But Welts, now the president of the Suns, says the commissioner always made amends. "Your phone would ring at 10 o'clock at night, and by the time you were finished talking to him, you were ready to charge into the office to do battle on behalf of the NBA," he says. "He has a miraculous ability to create what seems to be a unique relationship with everyone who works for him."

The consensus is that Stern has mellowed, but his demanding nature is still there for all to see. "Hey, Peter," Stern says to Peter Fink, a member of his events team, the night after the game in Barcelona, "the NBA Cares spot [that was played on the scoreboard] had really low volume. What happened?" He doesn't bark, but it's clear that he wants an explanation of perhaps the only thing that went wrong all night. "Technical glitch," says Fink.

As Stern reclines his seat en route to Moscow, he pulls out his BlackBerry. "This is perfect," he says. "I can read the reports." (All NBA department heads are required to file them weekly.)

A weary Messick, who has been working 20-hour days for the past month, turns around. "I didn't do mine yet," he says.

"That's O.K.," says the commissioner, though his tone suggests, *I wish you had.*

When he meets with staffers, Stern's favorite sign-off line—he uses it a half-dozen times during his week in Europe—is some variation of this: "Congratulations on a great job. And, as usual in the NBA, your reward for working hard is more hard work."

It would be a vast understatement to say that Stern's staff is alert when gathered around him. His minions, pens poised for note taking, do attentiveness the way Nancy Reagan did adoration. Their efficiency is alarming. When a journalist travels with the commissioner, someone greets him on the tarmac, reaches around his neck to remove the credential from the Barcelona games and replaces it with the one for Rome. (In the real world a reporter could expire from thirst before an official would deign to point out the location of the press gate.) "David is extraordinarily demanding," says Messick, "because he understands how an event is supposed to be run. There's no part of the process he hasn't been through, so he gets frustrated when he doesn't see the results he's looking for."

ROCK STAR Autograph hunters in Paris besieged Stern, who after 22 years in office is more recognizable than most NBA players.

Ask if Stern can be a fire-breathing dragon, and some NBA staffers will roll their eyes in affirmation.

BUT STERN can also be disarmingly informal. Even if this is studied, it works. Almost everyone calls him David. (When Stern is not around, a simple *He* is an adequate replacement. *What did* He *think? Is* He *coming to the meeting?*) The commissioner remembers the names of his employees. He swears strategically. The NBA hires an extraordinary number of eager beavers, and Stern is able to reach across the generation gap—partly because they're focused on pleasing him, of course, but partly because he can extemporize about the latest Xbox, the success of *Grey's Anatomy* or the stylistic differences between Adidas's Stella and Y3 models. That stuff doesn't slide easily out of the mouth of Bud Selig.

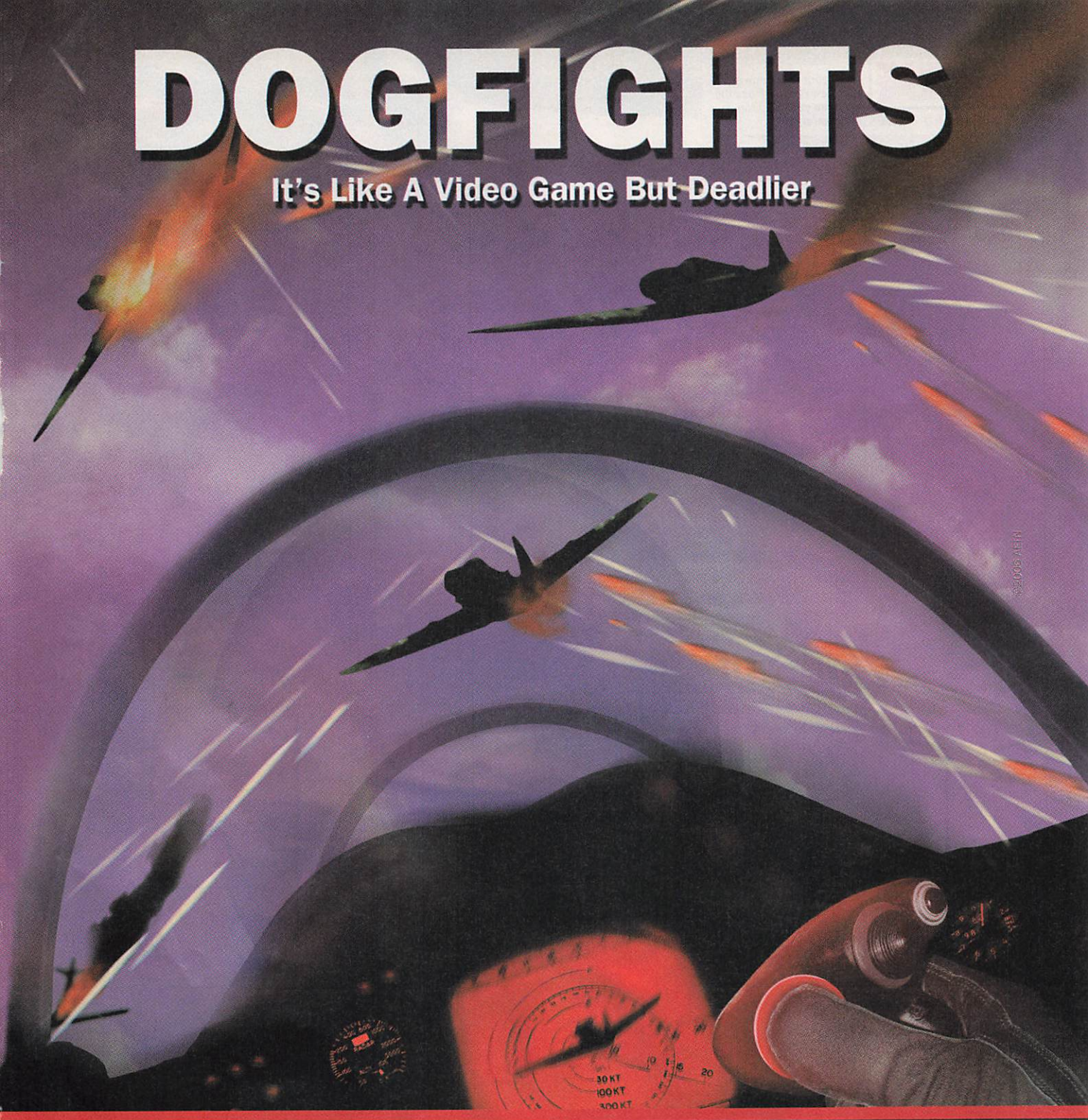
On the afternoon of Stern's final day on tour, in Cologne, about two dozen of the NBA's young international staffers gather in a hotel conference room at his request. Sitting comfortably at the head of the table, the commissioner asks each of them to state his or her name and length of employment. After Tom Marchesi, a young NBA International p.r. man, finishes, Stern nods approvingly. "I've been reading your stuff on BlackBerry," he says. You don't think young Marchesi would run through a wall for this guy?

When Stern himself finishes, everyone in the room applauds.

On his way out, he passes a reporter. "You look a little tired," Stern says. "Are you going to make it till the end of the day?"

And the NBA's alpha male marches on. □

GREGORY SHAMUS/NBAE/GETTY IMAGES



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- **DOGFIGHTS** 10pm/9c

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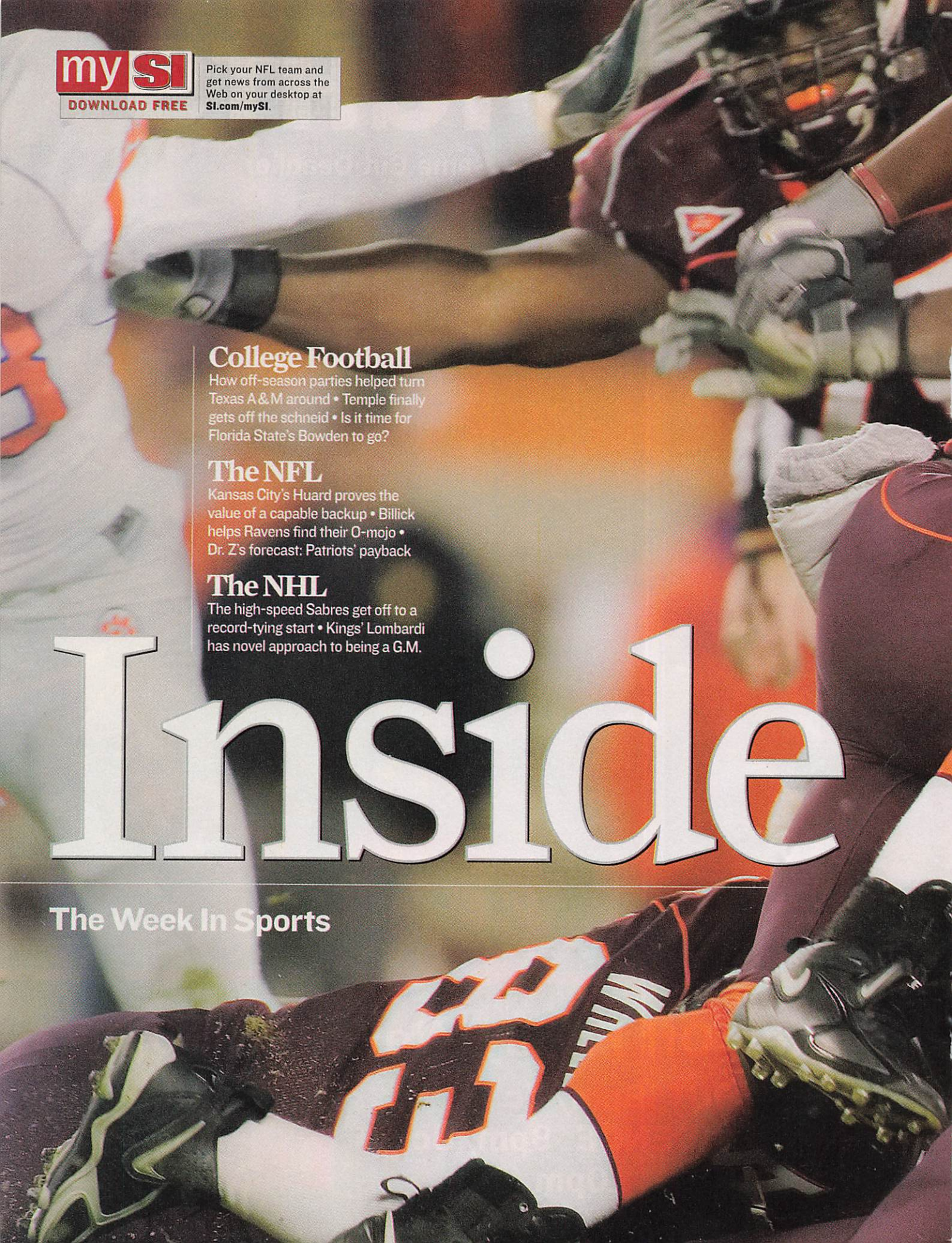


College Football

How off-season parties helped turn Texas A&M around • Temple finally gets off the schneid • Is it time for Florida State's Bowden to go?

The NFL

Kansas City's Huard proves the value of a capable backup • Billick helps Ravens find their O-mojo • Dr. Z's forecast: Patriots' payback

The NHL

The high-speed Sabres get off to a record-tying start • Kings' Lombardi has novel approach to being a G.M.

Inside

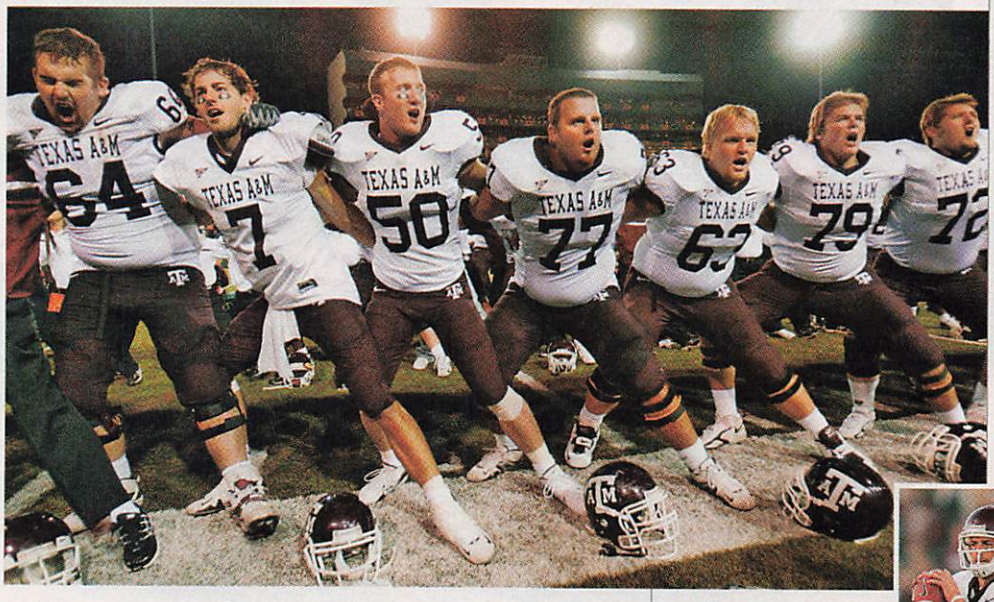
The Week In Sports

RUNAWAY After two straight ACC losses, Elan Lewis and Virginia Tech bounced back with a 24–7 upset of Clemson last Thursday night.

Photograph by David Bergman

Inside College Football

by Mark Beech



Arm in Arm

Thanks largely to off-season gatherings that built team unity, Texas A&M is rocking at last under Dennis Franchione

THE SPARK for Texas A&M's surprising season was struck last December, after a bitterly disappointing 5–6 campaign. That's when right guard Kirk Elder and a handful of Aggies began talking about how to revive a team they felt was lacking cohesion. The group came up with an idea: house parties, albeit without kegs and coeds. Building Champions is what the players dubbed the bonding sessions, held every week from January through July. Elder hosted them at the ranch house in College Station that he shares with left tackle Corey Clark, defensive end Chris Harrington and left guard Chris Yoder. "Just a bunch of guys getting together, having Xbox tournaments," says Elder, who, like his housemates, is a redshirt junior. "Players only. If random people showed up, we kicked them out."

The result of all that Xboxing has been apparent, as the 21st-ranked Aggies (8–1) have proved to be one of the most resilient teams in college football. Five of the Aggies' last six games have gone down to the wire—including wins over Army, Kansas, Missouri and Oklahoma State, as well as a loss to Texas Tech—and A&M has trailed at some point in each of its last seven games. While their 31–21 win at Baylor last Saturday night didn't come down to the final possession, the Aggies didn't exactly have a breather. Playing before the largest crowd in Floyd Casey Stadium history, A&M didn't put the Bears away until the final two minutes, when freshman running back Mike Goodson scampered 64 yards down the left sideline for a touchdown. "This is the first team I've had since I've been here that's had this sort of resolve to finish games," says fourth-year coach Dennis Franchione, whose job was in jeopardy when the season began. "They've kept playing and believing."

IN STEP McGee (inset) has been a leader for the now-cohesive Aggies.

The Aggies aren't getting by on camaraderie alone. The defense, which ranked 107th in the country last year, has improved under new coordinator Gary Darnell. The coach at Western Michigan from 1997 through 2004, Darnell installed a 4-2-5 scheme, which allows A&M to employ multiple looks in the front six while covering the field with five defensive backs. This year the Aggies are 52nd in total defense. The offense revolves around sophomore quarterback Stephen McGee, who's averaging nearly 200 yards passing and more than 50 yards rushing and might be the best option quarterback in the nation. Behind him are a raft of talented backs, including the speedy Goodson and 276-pound tailback Jorvorskie Lane. A soft-spoken sophomore and budding ophiologist—his pet boa constrictor is named Bo—Lane leads the Big 12 in scoring with 17 touchdowns. "We have running backs who could get more carries," says Franchione. "We have wide receivers who could demand more catches. But not once has anybody asked for more. These kids are so close."

"It's been a different guy who's made the difference in every game," says senior wideout Chad Schroeder. "We're feeding off each other."

That wasn't always the case. Many of the upperclassmen on last year's team had been recruited by Franchione's predecessor, R.C. Slocum, who was fired in December 2002. The commitment of a handful of those players to Franchione's system was uneven at best, and Elder says that spotty attendance at voluntary workouts was a problem in the summer of '05. "Those workouts aren't just about getting stronger," he says.

Making Bowl Bids

By virtue of its 34–20 victory over Sun Belt favorite Louisiana-Lafayette last Saturday, Middle Tennessee State, which started playing Division I-A football in 1999, is 5–3 (4–0 in conference) and one win from being in line to accept a bowl bid. Six schools that haven't been to a bowl in more than a decade have the requisite six victories or are one victory away.

TEAM	RECORD	LAST BOWL
OHIO	6–3	1968
KENT STATE	5–3	1972
WESTERN MICHIGAN	6–2	1988
SAN JOSE STATE	5–2	1990
INDIANA	5–4	1993
CENTRAL MICHIGAN	5–3	1994

TONY GUTIERREZ/AP; DARREN CARROLL (INSET)

"They're about accountability."

The Aggies' all-for-one attitude this season is about to be tested in a serious way. They close with home dates against No. 18 Oklahoma and Nebraska in the next two weeks and a season-ending tilt at No. 4 Texas on Nov. 24. There were rumblings of discontent from fans concerned about the team's play during their soft nonconference schedule. But by winning eight games Franchione, who's record at A&M is 24–20, has probably earned at least one more season on the sideline. "The only opinions we care about are the ones in the locker room," McGee said last week. "We play for each other."

TEMPLE'S FIRST WIN

Owls Break 20-Game Skid

Ever since he took over as Temple's coach last December, Al Golden has been preaching to his players about the importance of hammering at a metaphorical rock. "Just pound the rock, and it will eventually crack," Golden repeatedly told his team. "It's not the last strike that cracks the rock, it's the 2,000 that come before it." The rock was Temple's losing streak, which stood at 20 games, the longest in the nation, before the Owls finally turned it into rubble with a 28–14 victory over Bowling Green last Saturday.

PLAYMAKER Shelton scored on a reception and a kickoff return in Temple's upset win.

The two final blows that shattered the streak for Temple (1–8) were quarterback Adam DiMichele's 45-yard touchdown pass to Bruce Francis, which gave the Owls a 21–7 lead in the third quarter, and Travis Shelton's 96-yard kickoff return in the fourth quarter after the Falcons (4–5) had closed the gap to seven. The victory was especially gratifying for the Temple players who suffered through two severe whippings by Bowling Green, 70–7 last season and 70–16 in 2004.

The Owls are so young that many of them weren't around to experience both of those defeats. Golden, who worked the previous five seasons as the defensive coordinator at Virginia, has used 20 true freshmen this season, and Temple has started as many as 17 freshmen and sophomores in a game. The inexperience, combined with a challenging schedule that includes only four home games and features Clemson, Louisville and Minnesota—all of whom beat Temple by 50 or more—has led to the Owls' dismal record.

The end of the slide, which left Duke, losers of 16 straight games, with the nation's longest streak, undoubtedly brought a smile to the face of a famous former Owl. Comedian Bill Cosby, a Temple halfback in 1961 and '62 who now lives in Massachusetts, closely tracks the Owls' fortunes, calling Philadelphia radio station KYW-AM for updates while the games are in progress. Until Saturday the news had been dreary ever since Temple's last win, over Syracuse in November 2004.

This season Temple has been outscored 351–71 in its eight losses and has surrendered 62 points or more in three of those games, which means there is still plenty of room for improvement. But at least Cosby, who knows a thing or two about jokes, can be satisfied that his Owls no longer are one.

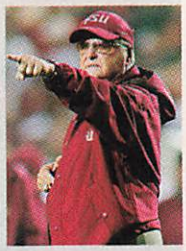
—Phil Taylor

RON CORTES/PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER (SHELTON); GARY ROTHSTEIN/ICON SMI (BOWDEN); JOHN BIEVER (WOODLEY)

STEWART MANDEL'S

Two-Minute Drill

HOT TOPIC



With Florida State (4–4, 2–4 in the ACC) in last place in the ACC's Atlantic Division, coach Bobby Bowden is enduring unprecedented criticism. Last week two Palm Beach–area boosters called for the 76-year-old coach to retire, and another alum has created the website retirecoachbowden.com. "I know I can't last forever," says Bowden, the winningest coach in Division I-A history. "But I just can't convince myself that I can't [get the job done]." FSU is 5–8 in its past 13 games and has lost more games since the start of the 2001 season (24) than it had in the 15 seasons before that (19). Bowden *(above)* notes that Penn State counterpart Joe Paterno, 79, was similarly besieged before leading his team to an 11–1 record last season. "I've used that as a guideline," says Bowden. There's one major difference, however: Paterno overhauled his staff in 2004; Bowden, whose son Jeff has also been harshly criticized while serving as offensive coordinator, says he has no plans to shake up his staff. He blames FSU's woes on a rash of injuries, which has forced the already young Seminoles to start five true freshmen, and points out that all four losses have been by seven points or less. "I can't stand that 'wait till next year' deal," says Bowden. "But next year we'll have almost our whole team back, plus some guys out of the hospital. This group is going to turn it around. Who knows—it could happen next week."

BY THE NUMBERS

Michigan's past three opponents (Penn State, Iowa and Northwestern) have rushed for a combined 14 yards. For the season the second-ranked Wolverines lead the country in rushing defense, allowing 28.4 yards per game. Much of the credit goes to Michigan's dominating defensive line. Junior tackle Alan Branch is considered the top NFL prospect in the country at his position, and senior end LaMarr Woodley *(left)* ranks second in the country in sacks, with 11.

THREE AND OUT

1 By firing coach John Bunting on Oct. 22, North Carolina gave itself a leg up on the competition if it intends to woo Butch Davis. The former University of Miami and Cleveland Browns coach, who is looking to return to the sideline following a two-year break, has expressed interest in the job.

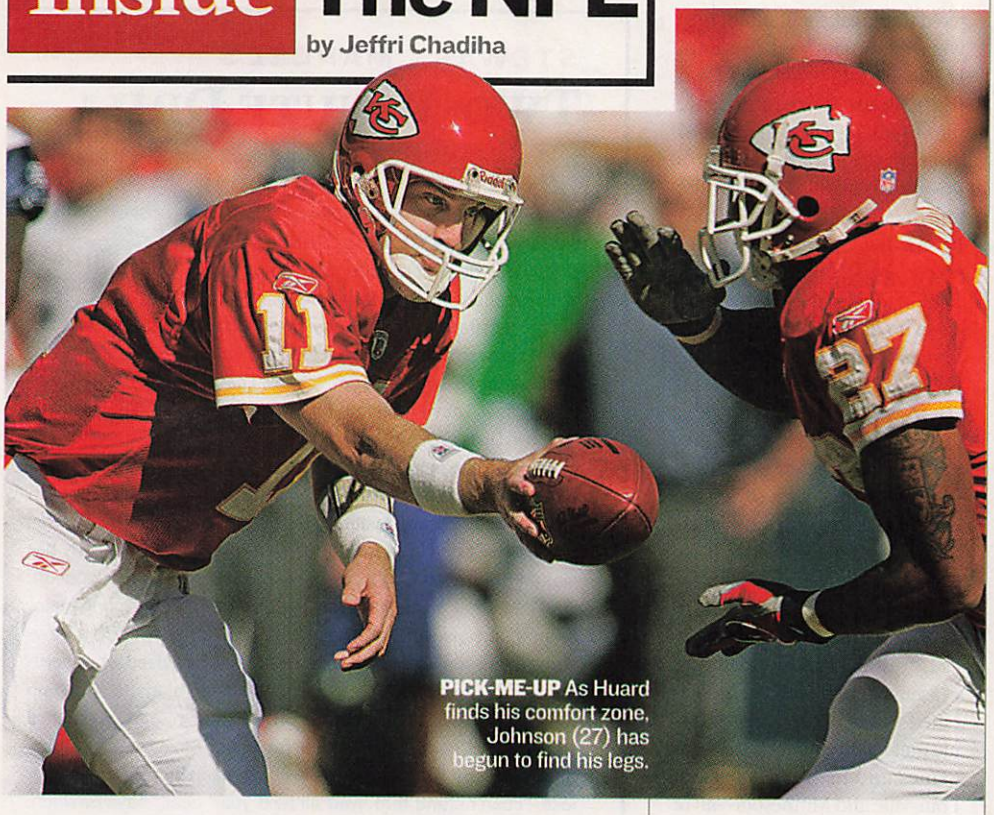
2 If USC does not beat Cal on Nov. 18, it will probably be shut out of the BCS for the first time since 2001. The two Fiesta Bowl berths will most likely go to the Big 12 champion and Boise State (if it stays undefeated), while the Sugar and Orange will want more geographically attractive at-large teams.

3 Give credit to Washington State coach Bill Doba for reversing the Cougars' fortunes following consecutive losing seasons. Wazzu (6–3), which lost five games last year by four points or less, has eliminated the drama by routing Oregon and UCLA the past two weeks.

Read more from Stewart Mandel at SI.com/collegefootball.

Inside The NFL

by Jeffri Chadiha



PICK-ME-UP As Huard finds his comfort zone, Johnson (27) has begun to find his legs.

Cool Hand

Trent Green's lengthy injury hasn't sunk the Chiefs—thanks to the unflappable performance of backup QB Damon Huard

TERRY SHEA, the Chiefs' quarterbacks coach, didn't like what he was seeing. It was 2½ hours before kickoff against the Seahawks at Kansas City's Arrowhead Stadium, and his starting QB, Damon Huard, was moving like a man who hadn't shaken the strained groin he'd suffered three days earlier in practice. Huard grimaced throughout most of a 20-minute workout that included multiple drop-backs, simulated handoffs and throws from the shotgun. But despite the pain, Huard was in the lineup—and he delivered the best performance of his 10-year career, going 17 for 25 for 312 yards and one touchdown in a 35–28 Chiefs win. "There was no way I wasn't going to be out there," Huard said later.

Thanks to Huard's steady hand, Kansas City is 4–3 and in the hunt in the AFC West despite having lost starting quarterback Trent Green in the season opener. Huard's primary contribution has been to provide stability at football's most important position. "Damon hasn't played like a backup," says Shea. Indeed, Huard has kept his mistakes to a minimum (eight touchdowns, just one interception in 188 attempts) and shown he can make the big throw—none bigger than the 51-yard fourth-quarter completion to wide receiver Eddie Kennison on Sunday that set up running back Larry Johnson's game-winning three-yard touchdown run. Indeed, Huard's performance has eased some of the pressure on Johnson, who after a slow start broke out in the last two games, with 287 rushing yards and five touchdowns.

As is the case with most backup quarterbacks, no one knew what to expect from Huard, who went undrafted out of Washington in 1996 and had just six NFL starts before this season. They know now. "You can see that [Huard] has a lot of savvy," said Seahawks linebacker Julian Peterson. "He obviously understands the game because he's been around for a while. He just hasn't gotten the reps."

In the Chiefs' eyes, the best thing about Huard is that he hasn't tried to overcompensate for the leadership they lost when Green sustained a severe concussion in a season-opening loss to Cincinnati. What Huard has learned in a career that has taken him from Miami to New England to Kansas City is that the best backups don't try to do too much. Says Huard, "I understand that my job is to get the ball to our playmakers."

The Chiefs devised a very conservative game plan for Huard's first start, at Denver on Sept. 17. Johnson carried 27 times, and Huard passed for just 133 yards. But he was efficient—17 of 23—in the 9–6 overtime loss, and after that the Chiefs felt comfortable giving him more responsibility. In his last five outings Huard has averaged 29 attempts and 240 yards. "The best thing is that [K.C. coach] Herm [Edwards] hasn't overanalyzed me or overcoached me," Huard says. "He's just told me to go out and have fun."

Thanks to Huard, the Chiefs are less anxious about Green's return. They'd hoped to have him available on Nov. 12 at Miami, but Green says a more realistic date is Kansas City's Nov. 19 meeting with Oakland at Ar-

Dispatches

Philadelphia's reliance on the big play is backfiring big time. Despite gusty conditions on Sunday against Jacksonville, the Eagles called 43 passes and just 15 runs in a 13–6 loss; **Donovan McNabb** *(right)* threw for just 161 yards. "We're looking to see where the next big play is coming from instead of driving the ball down their throats," said running back **Brian Westbrook**. In their last six games the Eagles have had the ball an average of 25.5 minutes. . . . Giants doctors say linebacker **LaVar Arrington** should fully recover from the Achilles tear suffered on Oct. 23. The question is whether he'll ever become the difference maker the Giants were looking for when they signed the three-time Pro Bowler to a free-agent deal this off-season. . . . As if the 2–5 Browns didn't have enough problems, five players have been diagnosed with staph infections since 2003, most recently injured center **LeCharles Bentley**.

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GARY BOGDON (CHIEFS); DAVID BERGMAN (MCNABB)

rowhead. Last week he received clearance to do individual drills, and he's hoping to start full team practices this week.

In the meantime, Huard will try to continue a run that he calls the most enjoyable time of his career. As he walked gingerly out of Arrowhead Stadium late Sunday afternoon, his eyes scanning the parking lot for loved ones, he acknowledged the fate of the backup quarterback—that sooner or later the ride will end. "This job belongs to Trent," Huard said. "I'm just doing the best I can until he comes back to claim it."

RAVENS OFFENSE

Billick to The Rescue

Brian Billick was a busy man during the Ravens' bye week. After assuming play-calling duties following the dismissal of offensive coordinator Jim Fassel on Oct. 17, the Baltimore coach installed a few new wrinkles to the offense. The result: The Ravens had a season high for points in a 35–22 victory at New Orleans and looked like a team that finally knew how to use all of their offensive weapons.

WORKHORSE The Ravens' new approach includes giving Lewis a bigger rushing load.

Billick trotted out four-receiver sets. He gave running back Jamal Lewis 31 carries, the most he's had in a game since the 2004 season finale. And he had quarterback Steve McNair passing downfield more often to capitalize on the talents of Pro Bowl tight end Todd Heap and wide receivers Derrick Mason and Clarence Moore. Following the game Billick downplayed the impact of his new-look offense—"Today was about the players doing what they needed to do after having been coached properly in practice," he said—but there's no doubt the Ravens were energized by the adjustments.

"It was a good start," said Lewis, who finished with 109 rushing yards. "This was closer to what the offense is capable of doing. Guys were committed and wanted to execute because we knew it was going to be tough on Brian as a play-caller. We wanted to make things work."

A team source says the main problems with Fassel were that he couldn't decide if the Ravens were a run-first or pass-first team and that Billick—who hasn't called Baltimore's plays since 1999, his first season with the team—believed his friend had lost his play-calling touch. The sense around the club was that despite the much-publicized addition of McNair this off-season, the Ravens were slipping back into a familiar mode of relying on their defense to carry them.

Now they have renewed confidence, sitting atop the AFC North at 5–2 with a critical game at home this week against 4–3 Cincinnati. "We can score points with anyone," McNair said. "The key is that we didn't stop ourselves today."

REBOUNDING RAIDERS

Welcome Back, Porter

Jerry Porter appears—finally—to be moving past the turmoil that buried him deep in Oakland coach Art Shell's doghouse. The seven-year veteran wideout dressed and saw his first action of the year in the Raiders' 20–13 win over Pittsburgh, and the hope is that Porter, the team's leading

KEVIN C. COX/WIREIMAGE.COM (LEWIS); CHRIS KEANE/REUTERS (ROMO)

Peter King's Corner

HOT READ

Cowboys coach Bill Parcells can't be criticized for promoting Tony Romo to the starting quarterback job, but he can be criticized for waiting so long to make the move. Parcells had it in his mind to play the mobile Romo *(right)* over the lead-footed Drew Bledsoe as far back as August. The leaky Dallas offensive line helped doom Bledsoe—28th in the league in quarterback rating after seven weeks—but his decline has been evident for several seasons. Of the 21 NFL quarterbacks who have thrown 1,000 passes since the start of the 2003 season, only three (Kyle Boller, Joey Harrington, Kerry Collins) have a lower rating than Bledsoe's 77.0. Plus, Bledsoe has been sacked 151 times in that span, second only to Houston's David Carr. Instead of breaking in Romo against Houston's vanilla defense on Oct. 15, Parcells threw the fourth-year QB into a desperate situation in the second half of a Monday-nighter against the Giants the following week, with predictable results. Given Romo's impressive bounce-back performance (24 of 36 for 270 yards and a TD) in Sunday's 35–14 win at Carolina, Dallas fans are justified in asking why they hadn't seen him earlier.

SOUND BITE

"I think if we don't get [an agreement] in the next couple of months—which is extremely unlikely—the NFL won't have a chance in Los Angeles for the next 20 years." So said David Israel, one of the three state-appointed members of the Los Angeles Coliseum Commission, after the NFL made no substantive progress at its fall meetings toward its goal of returning to Los Angeles. "Generations of kids will grow up here thinking of USC and UCLA when the subject of football comes up," said Israel. "By 2020 this will be a soccer town." Two issues are holding things up. One, the NFL wants a promise of state or municipal money to help fund a $1 billion stadium project in downtown Los Angeles or Anaheim. Two, there's no logical team to move to Southern California. None of the plausible candidates—the Jaguars, Saints and Vikings—are for sale, nor are they interested in moving right now, according to insiders. And NFL owners don't want expansion, which would create an imbalance in the eight four-team divisions and dilute their TV revenue.

THREE POINTS

1 The league's best low-profile QB? Houston's Sage Rosenfels, who relieved a shaky David Carr and threw three TD passes to nearly bring the Texans back from a 21–3 deficit at Tennessee. Rosenfels has a great arm, is cocksure and looked as if he was playing his 115th game as a starter—not his 15th as a scrub.

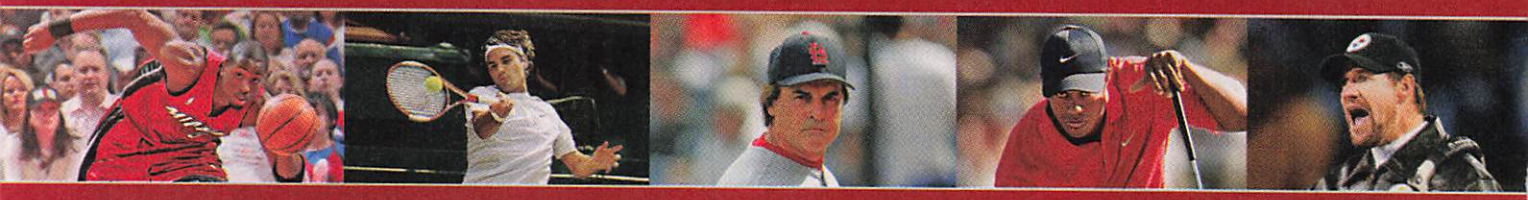
2 The most maddening penalty being called this season is unnecessary roughness on pass rushers for driving quarterbacks into the ground. What are the sackers supposed to do, stop and ask permission before they tackle the quarterback?

3 I don't know how Dennis Green is going to keep his job as Cardinals coach another month, never mind the rest of this season, with his team of dead men walking.

Peter King's Monday Morning Quarterback, every week at SI.com/football.

More from Jeffri Chadiha at SI.com/nfl.

The victory may have been theirs,



but it is not for the victory alone

that they are honored. Rather,

it is for the quality of their effort

and the manner of their striving.*

* From Sports Illustrated, December 23, 1957

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receiver the past two seasons, will be contributing as 2–5 Oakland tries to salvage a season that began with five straight losses.

Porter missed the Raiders' first four games because Shell had put him on the inactive list; the two had been at odds since they feuded in the off-season about Porter's workouts and his criticism of Shell's hiring. Once he came off the inactive list, Porter didn't take long to rile Shell. Before the team's fifth game, the coach suspended Porter for four games for "conduct detrimental to the team"—he reportedly talked back to Shell and refused to leave the practice field when asked. The punishment was reduced to two games after the NFL Management Council and the NFL Players Association discussed the matter, and Porter and Shell talked last week, apparently settling enough of their differences that Shell allowed the wideout to suit up for Pittsburgh. Porter made only one catch against the Steelers, but his presence could free up fellow wideout Randy Moss for more big plays in single coverage, something Porter's replacement, Alvin Whitted (10 catches, 120 yards in six games), clearly couldn't do.

ALL SMILES With a catch and a win, Porter was pleased to be back in silver and black.

Porter didn't speak to the media after the Steelers game, but veteran defensive tackle Warren Sapp is glad to have a key weapon back. "Porter wants to be here," Sapp said. "Porter wants to play." □

PAUL SAKUMA/AP (PORTER); WINSLOW TOWNSON/AP (PATRIOTS)

Dr. Z's Forecast: Patriots' Day

PAT POUNDING New England's defense has hard hits in store for Indy.

THERE IS an unfounded belief that when the Patriots meet the Colts, Bill Belichick gets into Peyton Manning's head and confounds him with trickery so diabolical that Manning leaves his game in the locker room. This doesn't begin to tell the story. In their five defining games over the past three seasons, New England won four of the matchups. Belichick often resorted to the bizarre—a two-man line on occasion or an entire front of linebackers—but it was nothing Manning hadn't seen. What changed was the Pats' personnel and how Belichick used it. The constant was the idea that to stay in the game, New England had to reroute the Indianapolis receivers, rough them up a little.

It happened in two straight playoffs. In the AFC Championship Game following the 2003 season, Patriots defensive backs pushed the bump rules to the max, and Walt Coleman's officiating crew took a liberal view of the physical play. Four interceptions, three by Ty Law, unhinged the Colts' attack, and New England won 24–14. The next spring the memo went out that the the five-yard bump rule would be more strictly enforced. It didn't help the Colts, who lost 20–3 in the divisional playoff. Patriots defenders were still locking onto the receivers, who dropped four balls.

Their regular-season games those two years were closer. In '03 the Colts charged back from a 31–10 deficit to tie the game at 31. It ended 38–34, Patriots, with Edgerrin James stopped a half yard short of the end zone. A year later the story was almost the same, Indy setting up New England for the knockout punch at the end, only to have Manning sacked into uncomfortable field goal range. Mike Vanderjagt blew the 48-yarder.

The Colts had employed an interesting strategy, though. They'd almost beaten the Patriots in the '04 regular season by running the ball for 202 yards. They'd found something soft in a defense specifically geared to stopping Manning's fireworks. Last year, in Indy's 40–21 victory, it hardly mattered because the Colts attacked a crippled defense, and the game was over by mid–third quarter.

I think the lesson of the rushing success Indy once enjoyed will not be forgotten. James is gone, but the Colts have the twin hammers of reliable Dominic Rhodes and tireless rookie Joseph Addai, who was a big part of Indy's win over Denver. Addai is a bundle of energy, a guy who moves the chains, even against a big-league defense such as Denver's.

Well, coming off that dynamic victory over the Broncos, some might think the unbeaten Colts would be going into Foxborough as at least a slight favorite. Nope. On memory New England rates as a one-point choice. The oddsmakers are practically begging people to go for the Colts, but charitable picks have killed me this year. **I'm going with New England.**

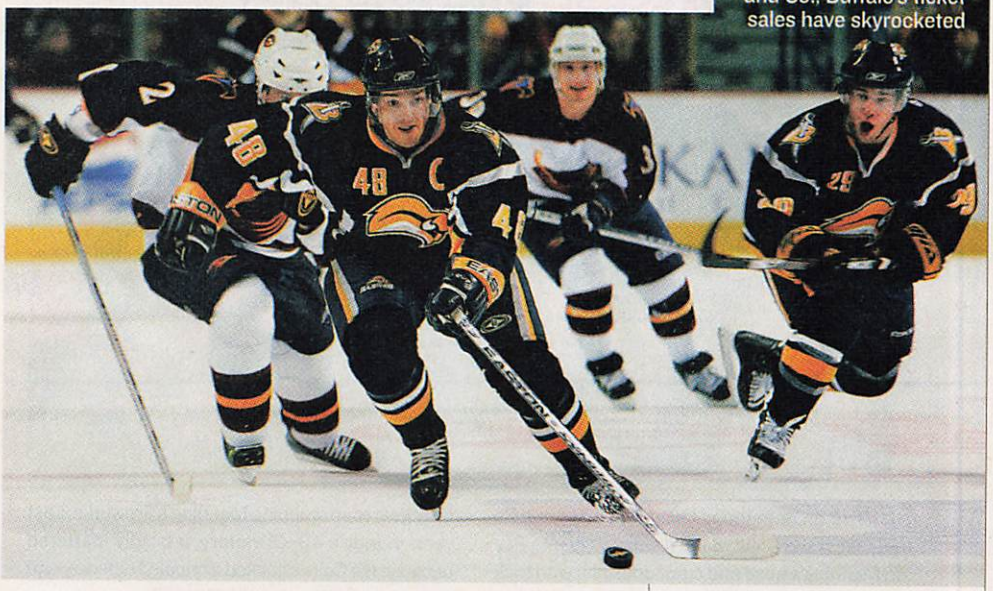
For all their talk of a tougher defense, the Rams are still friendly to a lot of runners, the latest being LaDainian Tomlinson, who creased them for 183 yards. I think Larry Johnson will try to match that number. **Chiefs** are the choice. Turnovers beat the Saints as much as Baltimore did. I say they right themselves at Tampa Bay, but I still like the **Bucs**. And just to keep things balanced, **Cincinnati** upsets the Ravens, Brian Billick's play-calling and all. Here's a weird choice that's only from instinct. **Washington** to beat Dallas, which is all smiles—at least for this week. Pittsburgh's ranking as a slight favorite over Denver is certainly an attractive invitation to play the underdog. But I've gotten too far away from my old "trap theory" this season, so now I'm coming back. **Pittsburgh** to win it. In the Monday-nighter it's **Seattle** over Oakland, but after the Cardinals-Bears game I don't make fun of any matchup anymore. —*Paul Zimmerman*

Last week 3–6 **Season** 29–33

Dr. Z writes for the Web every Wednesday, Thursday and Friday at **SI.com/nfl**.

Inside The NHL

by Michael Farber



RUSH ORDER Thanks to Daniel Briere (48) and Co., Buffalo's ticket sales have skyrocketed

Swift Success

The high-speed Sabres' record-tying start, on the heels of a great playoff run, has left their forgettable past in the dust

THE SABRES took 1,384 days to go from Chapter 11 to the brink of win number 11, which would have been a record for victories to start the season, but life and the crossbar got in the way for star-crossed Buffalo. Thomas Vanek's shootout scoring attempt ticked off the glove of Thrashers goalie Kari Lehtonen, then glanced off the bar last Saturday to seal Atlanta's 5–4 win. At least Vanek's shot didn't go wide right.

Heading into Thursday's game against the Bruins, Buffalo had 21 of 22 possible points, thanks in part to shootout victories. (Three wins had come that way, proving Sabres who live by the sword can die by the sword.) The team is the prototype for the shiny new league—not particularly big or overtly physical but stunningly aggressive on offense and faster than an auctioneer's patter. "If they play like that, they're going to win 80 games," Rangers right wing Jaromir Jagr told reporters last week. "Just like New Jersey brought in the trap 10 years ago, Buffalo brought something else. They changed the league. They play totally different."

The swarming Sabres rely on three lines patient enough to hang onto the puck an extra second to make a play, but their emerging star is right wing Maxim Afinogenov. The 27-year-old, who was tied for second in NHL scoring through Sunday (six goals and 11 assists) despite ranking fifth among Buffalo forwards in ice time, has been undressing so many defensemen, they might consider moonlighting at the Bada Bing.

On Oct. 17 Afinogenov, who no longer loses his nerve and the puck near the conclusion of his end-to-end rushes, blew past inert Flyers defenseman Derian Hatcher to score the sixth goal in a 9–1 humiliation that might have hastened the exit of Philly G.M. Bob Clarke. And last Thursday, Afinogenov abused Islanders veteran Brendan Witt on an audacious goal-scoring burst. "Max wasn't known as a finisher," Sabres coach Lindy Ruff says, "but he's more unpredictable now, shooting when people think he's going to deke."

Saturday's loss was Buffalo's first since bowing 4–2 to the Hurricanes in Game 7 of the Eastern Conference final. The Sabres have downsized their new logo—from a distance, they're the San Diego Chargers—and have increased their season-ticket base 67%, to 14,815 this year. For the remaining 36 home games, fewer than 30,000 tickets remain. In a gate-driven league afflicted by soft crowds (the Avalanche's streak of 487 sellouts ended Oct. 16, and an announced crowd of just 8,861 saw the Sabres win number 10 on Long Island), Buffalo's revival is as delightful as it is important.

Since losing the 1999 Cup on Brett Hull's foot-in-the-crease goal, the Sabres have suffered enough. Goalie Ryan Miller suggested Buffalo could start a new streak. "Why not?" he asked after the team stayed on the ice to salute its raucous fans in defeat. "I've got nothing better to do for the next [11] games." For a team that speaks to the Lazarus in all of us, this could be Chapter 12.

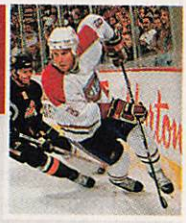
KINGS' G.M. LOMBARDI

His Secret Weapon: Tolstoy

Here's a novel approach to being a general manager: Dean Lombardi, the new G.M. of the Kings, is reading *War and Peace*, Leo Tolstoy's classic that is heavier than the Flyers' defense after a big meal. Lombardi, among the most detail-oriented executives in sports, picked up the book in an effort to gain insight into top Los Angeles forward Alexander Frolov. "Somebody told me if you truly wanted to grasp the Russian soul, you have to read *War and Peace*," says Lombardi. As of last week he had read about 200 pages and planned to keep plugging. □

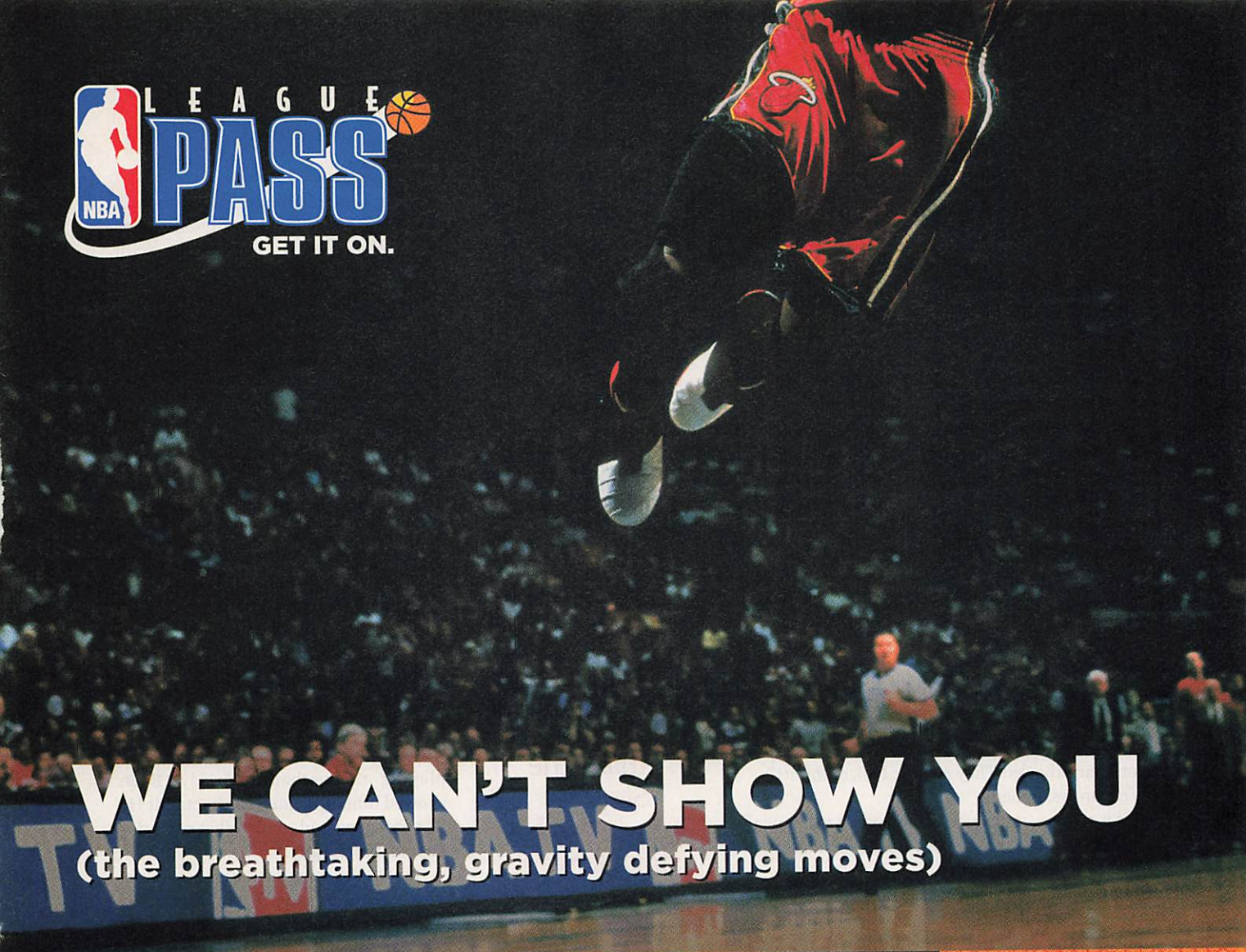
Pierre McGuire's

In the Crease



Thrashers coach **Bob Hartley** blundered last Thursday in a 3–2 shootout loss to the Flyers when he replaced **Johan Hedberg** with his top goalie, **Kari Lehtonen**, after OT. The outcome aside, Hartley risked potential injury to Lehtonen, who came in cold, and slighted Hedberg, who was 4–0 in shootouts for the Stars last year. . . . Montreal left wing **Chris Higgins** and defenseman **Mike Komisarek** *(above)* have improved their strength and quickness with yoga. Higgins (23 goals last season) had six goals through Sunday, and Komisarek's ice time has shot up from 14:40 to 20:25. . . . The poster boy for the new NHL is Ducks rookie **Ryan Shannon**: a 5′ 7″, 175-pound blur who would not be in the league were there not a premium on skill and speed.

LOU CAPOZZOLA (BRIERE); BILL WIPPERT (KOMISAREK)



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The Devil Went Down to Pittsburgh

by Rick Reilly

PLEASE ALLOW me to introduce myself.

I am Lou Siffer, agent for a Mr. Roethlisberger, Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback. And I'm coming to you, the fans, for help. Mr. Roethlisberger is in breach of our contract, even though I've held up my end of our bargain.

He stomped into my office two years ago, after he had dropped to the 11th pick in the draft, behind two other quarterbacks—Mr. Manning (the first pick) and Mr. Rivers (the fourth). "I know I'm better than those guys!" he yelled. "And Pittsburgh? The Steelers are pure hell for quarterbacks! They *run* the ball, dammit!"

My eyebrows arched.

"This is *not* how my career was supposed to happen!" he moaned. "I mean, I'd give *anything* to change this!"

"Anything?" I asked.

He spun and looked me right in the eye, slapped his palms on my solid-bone desk and barked, "Anything!"

I punched the intercom. "Miss Jones? Will you kindly bring in the standard contract? It's just like the one in Mr. Tyson's file."

Immediately, the world was his own personal Eden. His coach, Mr. Cowher, started him in just his third game, even though he'd normally rather start a Mafia target's car than a rookie quarterback. In fact, Mr. Roethlisberger went 13–0 in his first year, unheard of in the NFL.

He became the toast of Pittsburgh. More than that, he was the lunch—somebody invented a Roethlis Burger, and the whole city gobbled it up. He began dating a gorgeous pro golfer, Ms. Gulbis. I'd made him a star.

He came to see me again. "This is good," he said, with a demonic gleam in his eye, "but I want it *all*."

I made the Steelers' quarterback a star. He went 13–0 in his first year, unheard of in the NFL. He began dating a gorgeous pro golfer. But then he said, "I want it *all*."

So, in 2005, I gave it *all* to him. And as he was being carried off the field—the youngest quarterback ever to win the Super Bowl—I yelled up to him, "Happy?"

"Yeah, dude! Thanks for everything!"

"You still have the devil to pay," I mentioned.

And this is when he started to get weaselly.

"You know, Mr. Siffer, I checked with the players' association, and they said that a contract like that isn't legal."

And he disappeared, leaving me very unsatisfied.

Of course, right then and there, I could've sent him swimming for eternity in a river of boiling blood, or had crows gnaw on his head forever, but I didn't. Call me a softy. Besides, I wanted him on my team for a few years, sewing discontent, selfishness and greed. (We're very happy with Mr. Owens on that score.)

So I started with some subtle stuff. You know, gave his cell number to Larry King, put Ben-Gay in his jock, threw a new red shirt in with his whites, things like that.

Still, Mr. Roethlisberger wouldn't come around. So I took it up another notch and had his girl break up with him. And I made sure two of his best teammates—Mr. Bettis and Mr. Randle El—left the team.

Nothing.

Then I lost my temper and tried to kill him. Four months after that Super Bowl, I smashed him and his motorcycle into a Chrysler New Yorker at 40 mph.

But the damned kid lived. And as he lay in critical condition at the hospital, an even worse thing happened: You fans started praying for his soul. I just can't tell you how much that complicates things.

I complained to God while we were playing racquetball one day. Even showed him my signed contract. But He just shrugged and said, "What can I do? People like the guy!"

But Ol' Beelze doesn't quit easy, Bub. Three months later I put a pox on Mr. Roethlisberger's appendix. It nearly burst, but he survived. I had his backup, Mr. Batch, make like Joe Namath, just to spite him. But two weeks later, Mr. Roethlisberger was right back in there. So, I made him start throwing like Marie Antoinette. At one point his passer rating was 34.3. My pet serpent could do a 34.3. The Steelers' record fell to 1–3, but you just kept right on loving him.

Two weeks ago I sent three Falcons to knock him loopier than King George. Mr. Roethlisberger had to be taken off in a cart. Last week I even had him lose to the Raiders. (Al Davis is a friend.)

But he still wouldn't budge.

I'm stuck. I humbly ask for your help. I know it's not easy to have sympathy for the agent, but Mr. Roethlisberger and I had an agreement. Stop bailing him out with your infernal prayers and hope and faith in him. Please?

Or how about a compromise? I won't lodge him forever in a minotaur's colon, but can I at least trade him to Buffalo? □

PETER READ MILLER

 If you have a comment for Rick Reilly, send it to reilly@siletters.com.

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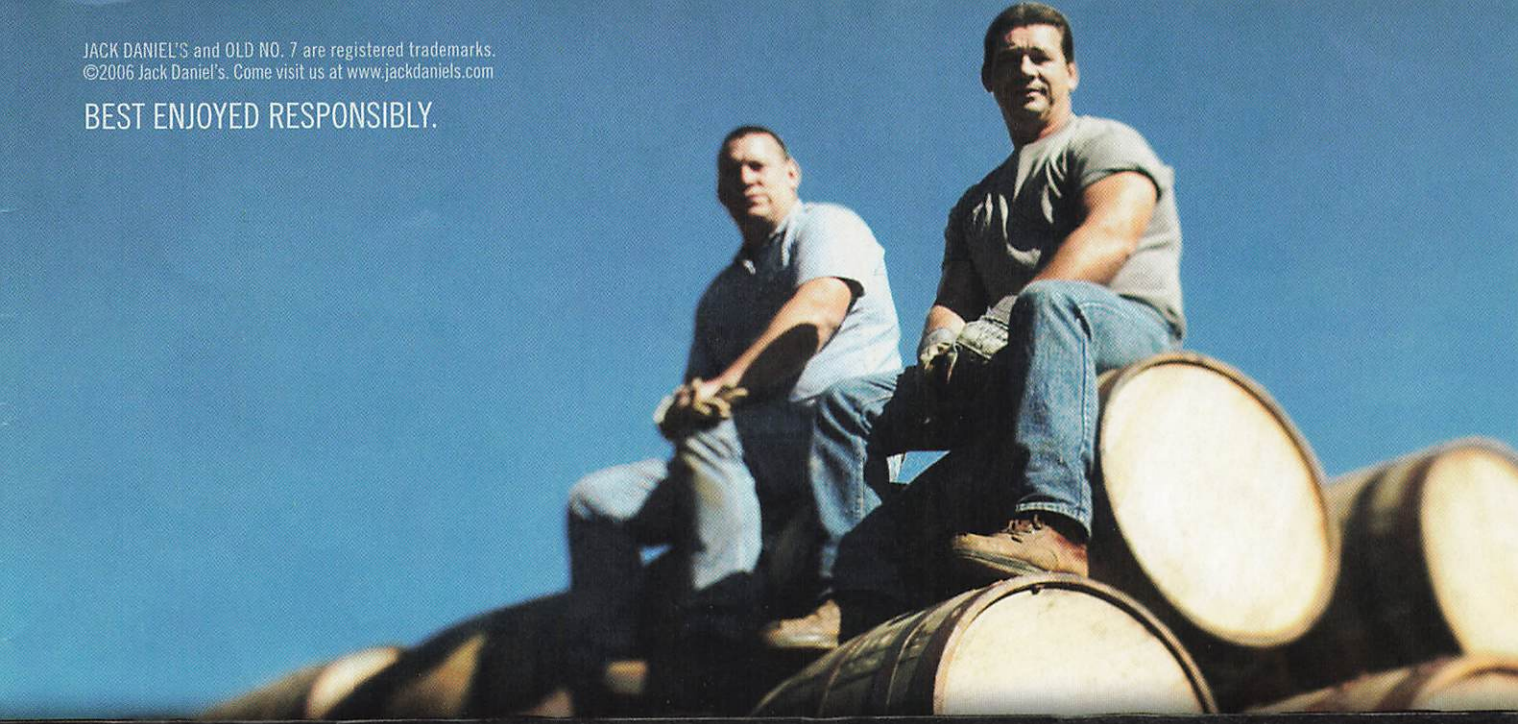

Meet Terry and Robin Holt (seated above). According to Terry, he's "Mom's favorite."

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